THE TIDE OF DESTINY

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WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS

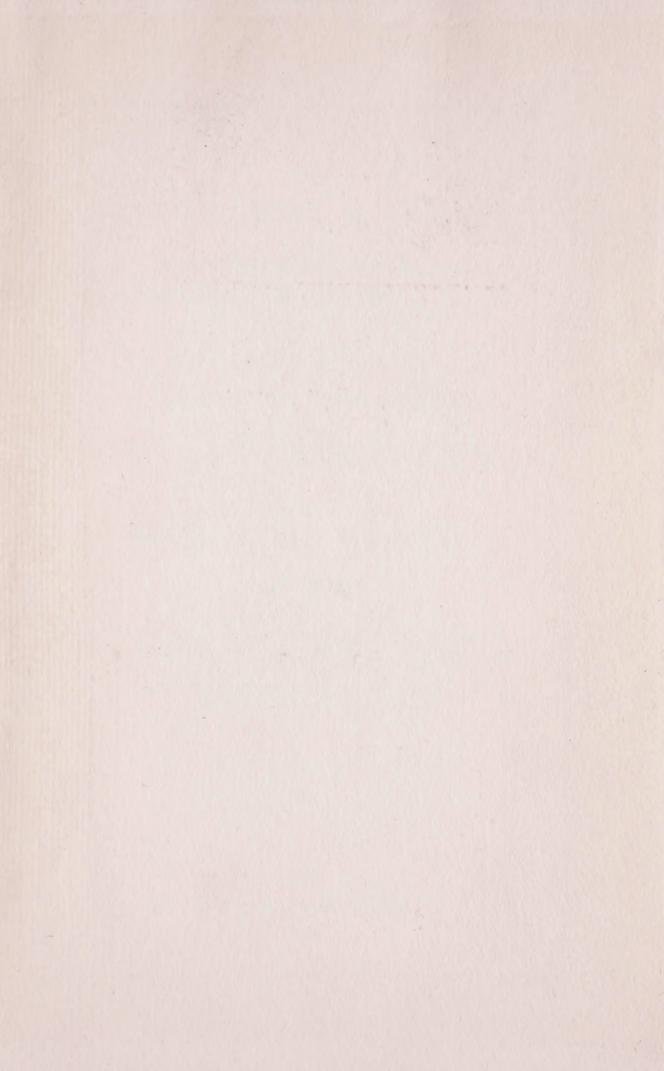


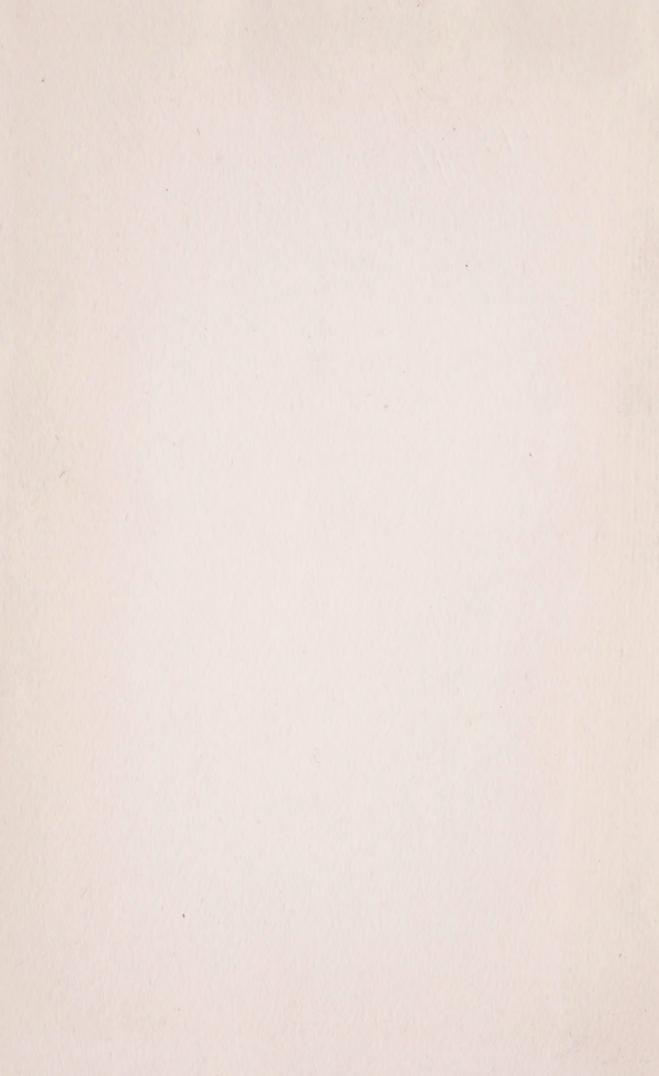
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The Tide of Destiny

A STORY WITH A PURPOSE

"To cheer the lonely, lift the frail, And solace them that weep."

A Popular Adaptation of The Great Fraternal Story

OUR BROTHER'S CHILD

By

William H. Reynolds

AUTHOR OF

OUR BROTHER'S CHILD,
LETTERS TO A MINE FOREMAN, THE PENALTY,
THE PROPHECY, A CHANGE OF SONG, ESTHER'S BABY,
ANGELS UNAWARES, THE DOVE OF PEACE,
THE BRATTICE MAN, A VOYAGE THROUGH
FIRMAMENT, ETC., ETC.

1910

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By

WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS.

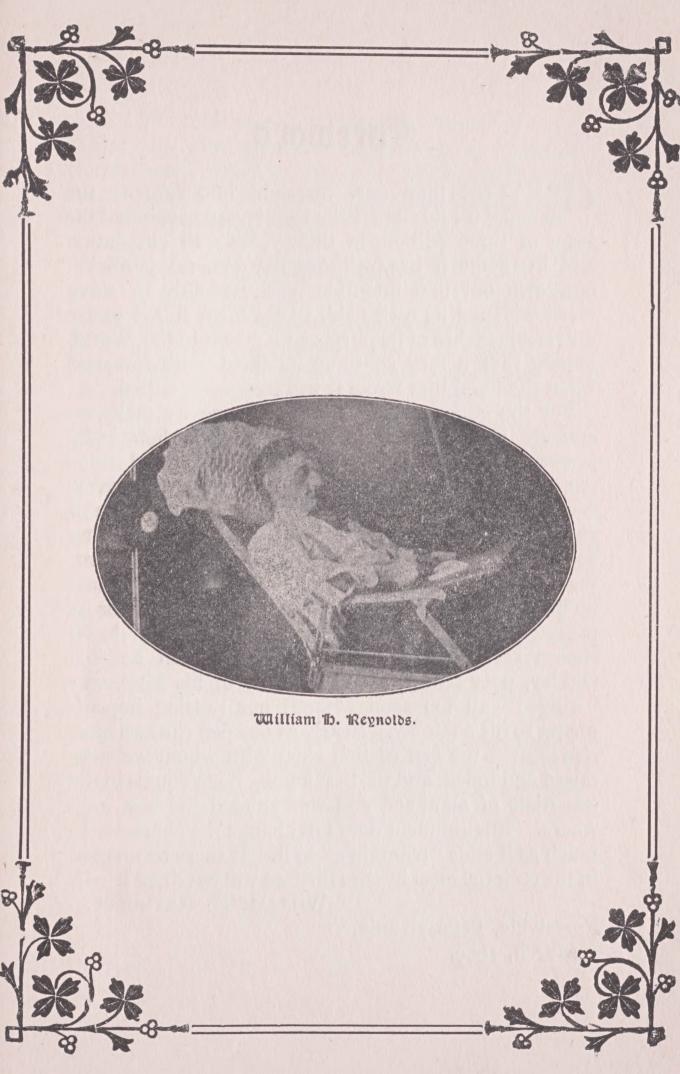
The Tide of Destiny.

"Asleep, awake, by night or day,
The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can drive my bark astray,
Or change the "Tide of Destiny."

DEDICATED

To

ROBERT OAKLEY'S NAMESAKE
WITH HIS FATHER'S LOVE



Foreword.

GREATER than our foresight into futurity the demand for this terse little Romance necessitated the issue of three editions in three years. In circulation and in theme it has, without any general publicity, outgrown our first intention, and evidently by sheer merit widened its own field. In a form suited to the universal reaches of its purpose we give it to the World, hoping that it may continue its silent work for good when the hand that wrote it will be forever stilled.

For the ethical flavor of the romance we make no apology whatsoever. Be one never so rhetorically powerful, direct one's effort with what moral force one may, individual life is so quickly gone, the neverweakening power of multitudinous evil in the form of greed, inherent or acquired selfishness, the cutting word studied or unstudied, so lasting and prevalent, that the net result of Good Influence in any form must be infinitesimal, and the more obvious necessity for its prosecution. In the characters depicted we have chosen those genuinely human rather than angelic. Oakley, poor fellow, as do so many of his kind, was "winged" all too soon without our putting impedimenta to his anatomy. Nearly as our pen can, we have represented the best of that class with whom we were raised and toiled, and the best among them equals in the essentials of manhood and womanhood the best anywhere. Environment does not change the character so much as it adds "trimmin's" to it. If there be no gold in the rock the most intense furnace will not draw it out. WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS.

Forestville, Pennsylvania, March, 1909.

THE FOLLOWING POEM DEPICTS MANY A NAME UNWRITTEN AND UNSUNG. ALSO DOES IT FORECAST SO ADMIRABLY WHAT THE READER MAY EXPECT IN THE CHIEF MALE CHARACTERS OF THE FOLLOWING STORY THAT WE IMPRINT IT HERE.

ABOU BEN ADHEM.

Abou Ben Adhem, (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold.
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The vision raised its head,
And with a look made all of sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee then,
Write me as one that loves his fellowmen."

The angel wrote and vanished. The next night It came again with a great wakening light, And showed the names whom love of God had blessed And lo: Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

LEIGH HUNT.

CONTENTS.

			PAGE
CHAPTER	I.	AN ACCIDENT	I
Снартек	II.	THE YOUNG WOMAN IN THE CASE	8
CHAPTER	III.	A Scene At Sontag's Boarding House	14
CHAPTER	IV.	AND WHAT BECAME OF IT .	25
CHAPTER	v.	AN UNLAWFUL PASSION .	34
CHAPTER	VI.	"Somebody's Wife"	44
CHAPTER	VII.	THE FRIENDLESS	57
CHAPTER	VIII.	A New Idol At The Shrine Of Love	76
CHAPTER	IX.	A LITTLE BROOCH	86
CHAPTER	X.	"Peddle Or Starve"	100
CHAPTER	XI.	BENEATH A WILLOW TREE .	114
CHAPTER	XII.	A DARK RED ROSE	132

The Tide of Destiny.

BEING

A BRIEF ROMANCE IN WHICH IS DEPICTED MORE OR LESS FAITHFULLY CERTAIN THINGS WHICH HAPPENED DURING THE LIFE OF ONE OF GOD'S NOBLEMEN.

I.

AN ACCIDENT.

"I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show any fellow human being, let me do it now. Let me not neglect nor defer it, for I shall not pass this way again."

MANTEL-PIECE INSCRIPTION.

ABOUT six o'clock of the morning, in the early part of the winter in the year 1893, two men entered a waiting train in the old Union Depot in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. One proved later to be a doctor, the other a manufacturer, the former buoyant, healthy, young, the latter aged, careworn, white-haired. They entered the same seat in the coach, and spoke to each other as acquaintances do. The physician remarked his companion's weary, downcast appearance, and between puffs of a cigar he was lighting asked him if he were "still trying."

"Still tryin', Lowden," the elder of the two echoed, voice vibrant with age, infirmity and long continued sorrow. "A message from the Agency called me down yesterday, an' I was wi' them till mornin', an' stayed at Boyers' the neecht. An' to nae purpose to tell of. We're sure the gal laft the West, an' cam' East . . . but whear?"

The old man laid his hat on the seat beside him, too tired to reach up to the rack, and set his face to the window to watch without seeing the lights of the big city glide like dull comets into dark obscurity.

The young man looked at the tired face a moment, and from that trained glance came a suggestion, born of close friendship, that it was costing The Searcher

much worry and suspense.

"Aye, Laddie, an' money, too," came the response. "Detective sarvice costs money, too, lots of it, it does that. But," came decisively, with a setting of lips unflinching in determination, "I'd gie harf of all I

have; aye, all, Laddie, ane begin again."

As the old man said this he leaned back his head, and, following silence, fell into a semi-doze. The doctor pulled a paper from his pocket, and, with a casual glance at the other's physical "indications," as evidenced by the heavy pulsing in his neck, and the dark pouches under his eyes, fell into silence too. Even to him the ease of the car was soothing after a strenuous night, having been called by his alma mater to see a peculiar case which was operated on.

For awhile they sat thus, when both men were startled by hissing air, and of a sudden the train stopped, so violently that it threw both up against the seat ahead. The morning light was breaking, and figures moved in it down past the train's last coach. The doctor, too, tumbled out, and McFarlane followed him, to pitifully gaze a moment later on the cause of the sudden stop.

It was a man. He lay bleeding, unconscious, on the bank where the pilot had thrown him. He was obviously a workman, as evidenced by his clothes, but nothing in the shape of a dinner being scattered around, it was assumed he was on his way somewhere to get a

position.

"Poor fellow's got a bad bump," said the doctor to McFarlane, bending over him, and binding as best he could the bleeding limbs; "and," as if repeating to himself the various phases of a complete diagnosis: been ill-nourished for a long time . . . external injuries not sufficient to cause such a pulse . . but the shock . . ."

As he recited audibly, as yet impressed with the ways of the medical college, recently left, the "symptoms" of the case beneath him, the young surgeon worked skillfully, and as conscientiously as though the result meant great financial reward instead of none, nor the most minute possibility tending to insure success escaping his notice.

Oh, would the Preceptor's ethical admonition to the graduating class remain with all, as, to the great benefit of The Poor and Ill, and the everlasting credit

of the Profession, it does with some!

McFarlane, too, was intensely interested. He bent beside the young doctor, and peered closely into the injured man's face, but, what with the blood, poor light, and his own fading eyesight, he could not see the resemblance he had thought at first glance.

The doctor rose and spoke calmly as of a lighter subject, his words directed to the white-haired man who had followed him: "He's in bad shape, poor fellow." Then, more urgently to the group encircling the prostrate body: "Move out! Move out!! Let us lift him onto that city-bound train. . . . Here, you," he called to one or two of the men, "give a hand to the caboose, of course . . . "

Somebody flagged the train, and they put the injured man aboard. The white-haired man followed the group carrying him into the car, speaking aside to the surgeon. The youth's resemblance to Another had opened wide the gates of human kindness in the stern

old Scot.

"Will this make any difference, Lowden?" he asked, holding for the doctor's examination a slip on which was written something in a shaky hand.

"It hadn't ought to, but it will," the young man re-

turned impassively.

"Then, that's all," the old man responded, backwards: "War, no more than hospitals, can go on forever wi' out money, Lad," attributing outwardly at least his benevolent act to the Broader Cause. "Gie it in — if he'll live — if it'll do good. . . It's plain he's nae a meelyunair."

The doctor smiled as he placed the paper carefully in his pocket, glad in his heart to aid in the poor stranger's cause. He turned to his elderly companion on a good deed bent with a single note of warning.

"It'll be weeks, or months, McFarlane, if he make

it at all."

For once the depth of an oft ill-judged heart was laid bare.

It's nae deeference if it's a year," said the other, climbing slowly and uncertainly to the ground at the conductor's call of "All aboard!" "May the Gude Mon an' Human Love prompt someone to do as much for mine — if they need it," he uttered fervently. "One can never tell; one can never tell."

Oh! for the softening influence of Adversity! Why

not before?

Almost simultaneously the two trains started in opposite directions, conveying the young doctor and his patient back to the hospital from which the former had but lately come: the old man to a childless, wifeless home in the country south of Pittsburgh. In about a half hour the note was handed into the hospital office. Its wording was brief, and the name so well known as to make almost superfluous the attest of anyone, but its bearer had thought differently.

It ran:

"Until this injured man be discharged draw on my account at — National Bank for any expense on this case, and this shall be your authority.

ANDREW McFarlane."

Some time later a reporter, notebook in hand, accosted an assistant house surgeon in the corridor leading to the open grounds at the front of the hospital. It was obvious that both were intimate associates. Each equally youthful in appearance, and equally devil-may-care in action, while above them and about them Death and Suffering took anguished human toll. He of knife and saw was speaking:

"His name is Roberts: G., I think."

The man with the note-book wrote for a moment.

"That's quite a coincidence, Doc."

The surgeon looked at him questioningly. Just then arteries were more to the point than coincidences of any nature soever.

"That fellow hurt last night on the Pemicky had the

same name, don't you remember?"

"Which one was that?"

The question came almost with a smile.

"The case Anderson fixed up," the reporter replied.

"Oh, yes, I recall the matter now," returned the other. "That's not so unusual, though," he explained. "We frequently 'cut up' a pair of John Smiths."

"Also a few 'Ladysmiths,' " jokingly retorted the other man, at which sally of irreverent wit both broke into a guffaw echoing at the farthest recesses of the housed tunnel.

The remark was pertinent at that time, made so by a siege, prosecuted by the Boers, which our readers will remember.

"We'll admit the truth of that, also," cheerfully responded the surgeon, "but as far as your coincidence is concerned initials often suggest names which prove altogether dissimilar."

"Sure," nonchalantly. Then: "Shall I write he'll

live?"

"Hardly."

This last reply came in a tone of impatience. The doctor moved inwards as the reporter moved out, thrusting a cigar into his mouth and the notebook into his pocket at the same time. And with hat tilted

backwards at about forty-five, and the cigar upwards at about the same degree, the newspaper man went quickly into the street.

From the preparation room the injured man had been carried to the operating table, where, with dexterity and skill born of long experience, the surgeons plied their gruesome instruments. The quiet-footed angels of mercy flitted hither and thither, doing their share in the harsh yet merciful task. In a short time the yet unconscious body was placed in a private chamber. So far as the world at large was concerned the incident was over; the acute stage ended, the chronic begun.

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE.

"Then gently scan your brother Man,
Still gentlier sister Woman;
Though they may gang a kennie wrang,
To step aside is human;
One point must still be greatly dark;
The moving WHY they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark
How far, perhaps, they rue it."

BURNS.

RUNNING from Point Bridge, where it joins central Pittsburgh to its western environment, is an incline, up whose steep way denizens of the heights above the city are carried. At its base was a row of smoke-begrimed houses, occupied, as a rule, only by those unable to dwell in a pleasanter location. I say was, advisedly, since later years, bringing to that portion of the city many improvements, have also obliterated the unsightly tenements.

In one of those houses a young girl sat reading an evening paper. The step-mother, crabbed and impatient with the group about her, was at that late hour vigorously rubbing over a washtub. A dark-eyed sister, very much like the reading one, sat by the window facing the street, and looking dejectedly out at the twinkling lights fast increasing on the opposite side of

the Ohio. She was still dressed in the frock and apron that had garbed her during the day, having but a few minutes previously crossed the bridge from a factory where she worked. It was plain something out of the ordinary pressed heavily on the young woman's mind. One at seventeen or eighteen, in good health, does not sigh nor appear downcast without sufficient reason. For several minutes she sat apparently oblivious to the others in the room, and was yet in the same position when she who had been reading stepped quickly to her side and whispered, almost as if afraid to mention the fact aloud: "Helen, George's hurt; see here!"

The girl called Helen was apparently not much if any more than seventeen, but was plainly shocked by the ominous words. She seemed temporarily aged by work, or worry; perhaps both. Without speaking, unless we accept a warning shake of her head at the other as a silencing word, she took the paper into her own hands, already trembling and growing cold from the shock. She had hoped her sister mistaken: she found the fact there in all its glaring, heartrending entirety. She spoke in a few whispered words to the girl at her side, inaudible above the rubbing on the wash-board, and without speaking to the woman in the room placed a shawl over her head and went out.

A half hour later Helen had reached the hospital where the paper said they had taken the injured man. The cold night air had revived her slightly, but she again felt a heart-sinking as she entered the big building and asked an attendant if it were possible for her to see the patient. A few other words passed between

them regarding who and what she was, then he went

to someone else, and a little later came to conduct her into the accident ward, where, as she passed, her womanly imagination conjured pictures of suffering almost as weirdly tragic as reality later for her proved to be. For her the great building held only horrors. Her girlish eyes were blind to the father restored by skillful incision to work again for those who ill could spare him: to mothers' lives prolonged to see the wee group grow to manhood and to womanhood: the fevered body, which would otherwise too frequently lie and fester in its filthy environment of the slum, cleansed and cooled, pay or no pay, and mayhap get well, perhaps through the furnace of suffering refined and profited to the extent of becoming a better man or woman. Helen saw none of these silver linings which glint among much that is dark; in fact it was all dark to her.

She and the attendant walked together along the upper corridor, and entered gently a little room situated on the right side. The nurse at the bedside beckoned Helen to be seated. Lovingly her eyes met those of the injured man, but no words were spoken. She had been forewarned; he was too weak to speak. No tears were evident, but a death-like pallor crept over the young woman's cheeks as she looked on the form that only yesternight had clasped her in its embrace, now weaker than a new-born babe's; at the lips which had pressed her own with the passion of manhood, now a ghastly blue and white. For a full minute they sat thus, not a sound breaking the stillness of the chamber; poor meeting, but better than none.

In a very little while the sharp eyes of the nurse noted

the ill effect of the girl's presence on her patient. She whispered to her that it was imperative that she leave.

Helen rose regretfully, and more slowly than she had gone thence, went back home, where a still more diffi-

cult problem awaited her solving.

It is not for us to say this immature woman reached the right conclusion. She was young, without advice, or, if seeking it, received worse than none from the woman who should have been her confidante. Secrecy had bred secrecy, and some things which in a well regulated household would have been open to the knowledge of every inmate were known to two alone. And the young man in the hospital had done as he, too, thought best. Undoubtedly, could he have seen the trend affairs with him and the girl he loved were destined to take, he would not have been so importunate. But how many of us can speak to things we have done "all for the best" having turned ultimately "for the worst."

Between Helen and a haven of peace and refuge for her coming trial lay many, many miles, and as if it would help her — or him — she inscribed all her hopes, plans, ideas, on page after page, groping blindly each time she paused to rest for a more satisfactory way, for even the faintest hope that would lead her to stay nearer him. But after hours of struggling, like a man lost in a dense wood, she toiled only to reach the point she had started at.

To her perverted perception there appeared but one course to pursue, and this precluded the possibility of seeing him for some time; perhaps not till he was well. The more Helen pondered the more difficult seemed

the way before her, but the concrete fact remained that life where she was, under the circumstances, would grow worse instead of better, and end in a bitter crisis not to be borne. This was positively, painfully evident; the other was only a possibility, as we shall explain to the reader later.

She sealed the letter and handed it to Jennie, the

sister next oldest to herself.

"Give this to George," she said, "if he should get well and come out before I see him again." To her girl-mind the plans, hopes and fears — and loving words — entrusted to her sister were safer far than reposing among the group awaiting many patients' convalescence. In fact much suspense — we may say, misery — would have been saved Helen and George Roberts had the former been not older but more familiar with the circle in which hospital usage revolves. But like unto many of her kind, in the city and country, the girl had an imperfect knowledge of such places. Pardonable ignorance.

That night she and a younger sister went over to the city proper, and on the way Helen told the other that "George will be well in a few weeks, then you give him my letter when he comes over, and tell him to come out to Uncle Fred's, and if he can get work there

we'll soon be able to --- "

A noisy clanging car shut out the rest.

The younger girl promised, and the pair threading the maze of streets and wilderness of humanity were swallowed up in the tide of destiny and the blackness of the night.

An hour later Jennie was at home, and telling the

stepmother what had happened, and Helen was seeking the Peace that came not. That she had not left it at home was evident by an exclamation of the woman the younger ones called "mother," when Jennie told her all she knew.

"Then she's gone there, to that old rip's!" the latter anent an old score unsettled since the lifetime of Helen's father at the time of second courting. Jennie nodded, and the other slammed viciously an open door.

"Birds of a feather," she quoted with a vicious grin, and a sing-song voice then added: "Good riddance

. . . get ready for bed, you little devils!"

A SCENE AT SONTAG'S BOARDING-HOUSE.

I cannot know why suddenly the storm
Should rage so fiercely round me in its wrath;
But this I know, God watches all my path—
And I can Trust.

ANON.

YET as we shall see, there was some method in Helen's apparent madness in leaving the excuse for a home. A childless aunt and uncle lived in a mining town a long distance from Pittsburgh. Helen assumed that, inasmuch as the woman kept boarders she would no doubt welcome her as helper to her sister Sarah, who had been with them for a number of years. She knew that the last letter the Furness's had received from them bore the same postmark as those preceding it, and thence her journey lay.

If my reader knows mining life as pertains to those who follow it, as well as the precarious calling itself, I need hardly explain that few industries are more uncertain. And the minds of many of its followers are

even so.

The lure of the new mine — always, if report be truthful, a bonanza in comparison with the old — the temporary or total suspension of both, the umbrage of a new or old official, these and a hundred other things combine to make the surface tenure of the underground toiler as indeterminate as his hold on life and health.

One of these imps of adversity blocked Helen's way; the aunt and uncle, and with them the sister, on whose companionship the poor girl had counted strongly, were gone to another mine. When the man at the station told her that, her eyes filled, and she went blindly toward the village. Then she turned and went back to the ticket window.

"Do you know where?" she asked between sobs.

"Yes'm," the agent nonchalantly replied in a rather nice crescendo, shoving behind his ear, meanwhile, a pen, and leaning back from his desk. Helen's mopping made no impression whatsoever on the impassive face. Nor day nor night but joy or sorrow, usually the extremes of both, wring some heart or elate where trains come and trains depart and carry with them sundered friends. We know not a better place than a booking office if you enjoy witnessing the full scale of human emotion.

"Yes'm," he said, and stopped.

He thought a moment, then exclaimed, "Sure; I billed their goods to ——" mentioning a town about one hundred miles distant. "Want a ticket? Train'll

be in in thirty minutes."

Helen turned her face from the wicket, and fumble in her pocketbook. There were two pennies and one dime, and the fare was three dollars. She went out, almost without knowing why, her steps directed once more toward the mine town center. Once away from the station her mind became less confused.

Helen had walked perhaps half a mile when, tired mentally and physically, she sat down on the edge of a plank walk running up one side of the village street. She made inventory of her possibilities, and they all centered in the same thing: work — and there — and

immediately.

She was a brave little body, but the overwhelming chances looming too plainly against her made her heart-sick. Despite her every effort to suppress it she began to cry again, and was still crying when a group of miners and machine runners went past, big, strapping fellows, either one who, had he known, would in the largeness of the miner's heart, have picked her up as he would a child, if need be, and carried her bodily to a haven of temporary refuge. Boylike, they are against all restraint, almost foolish at times in striking when there is no need, or scarcely any, but big-hearted and courageous to a fault, among them some of God's noblest and most fearless men, ready at any moment to risk their own lives to save others. The very nearness of danger and death seems to refine in the American and British miner the dross of self. But not knowing the girl they gave her but a casual glance, and went on.

Behind them the air trailed strongly, oiled and blasphemous, and rippled with laughter and that spirit elation born of youth and strength and a day's toil ended.

Helen made up her mind that she would not let the next opportunity pass, and it soon came in the form of a counterpart of the taller of the group which had passed, yet lither in movement, having a more intelligent face — and cleaner — yet like them clad in blue overalls and jumper, and his cap also decorated with a pit lamp.

Helen had risen and stood slightly aside.

"Good evening," she said, and he immediately raised

his hat and slackened pace — then stopped.

For a long moment it seemed to Helen his eyes pierced her, in his endeavor to identify her morally and by name.

"I—I"—she stammered—then again, "I wonder—that is—do you know if there's any one

around here that wants a girl?"

Robert Oakley's face colored beneath the faint oily dirtiness, but resumed its normal function on the girl adding quickly — "to work for them?"

"Oh!" he exclaimed; then, after a moment's study:

"No, miss, I don't think I do."

Helen's hand tightened on the rail running parallel with, and about three feet above, the boardwalk, and her face grew white, and her lips trembled. None of this escaped the youth. He moved a step or two—homewards—but the look of appeal in the girl's eyes was obvious evidence even to him that her case was more desperate than it seemed, and she had stated. She told him a little of it—that concerning her uncle and aunt, and in return he confided in her to the extent of saying he had not known them.

"I'm half a stranger, too," he laughed, and with his eyes bent on the girlish form: "but evidently better

positioned than you - just now."

Unconsciously the two had started forward slowly, neither knowing to what end those steps were ultimately to lead them.

"You might as well walk up toward the village, any way," Oakley suggested, "and make inquiries."

And as they went hunger made his strides longer, until he would suddenly bethink of the less large and less nimble feet accompanying his, and reset his pace

accordingly.

"I came here with a lot of new machines they're puttin' in," he told her with that lack of connected, serious thought characteristic of the young man whose whole soul has not yet been divided between Work and Woman. You one-fourth the time; himself, and his work—until he meet The Destroyer of Ego—four-fifths. "They sent me here from Indianapolis — the shops,

vou know."

Helen looked up at him, questioningly.

"Then you — you ain't a miner?"
"Only half a one" he smiled; and, letting her dark eyes rise to the top of his six feet and more, Helen thought, despite her sadness, that a whole one must indeed be something of a whopper. Also she had never before seen but one man's face she had liked as well and trustingly. Intuitively her inherent sex quality gave to her vision of his soul, and its index told her that that countenance would never harm her, and that anything those lips told her would be, as far as their owner could foresee, for her good.

"Are you?" he questioned, and then coloring like a school girl, "that is, I mean, are you a miner's girl?"

"Father used to dig coal on The River," she explained, "but he died while I was little. Then our - the woman he'd married, took us to Pittsburgh, and I worked in the cork factory until — until — I couldn't stand it any longer," she turned, whether the home or the work she didn't say. "Mother - that is the

woman, I mean, often used to put me out at night, after working hard all day, because I'd hate to see her

beat the kids, and would fight for the little ones."

The couple turned an abrupt corner, and went down a sulphur-covered road toward a big red house. The head frame of an air shaft darkly loomed above one side, and a nice grove of trees fringed the other. The house was considerably past the village, which fact came suddenly to the girl's notice.

She turned. "It's no use me going that way," she

said; "I didn't notice we'd gone past the houses."

The young man stood for a moment undecisive. Then he suggested:

"Come in, and I'll speak to Mrs. Sontag — my board

missis."

A slight hope was better than none. Helen went, and he led her to the rotund matron of "The Company Hotel."

Caroline Sontag was very busy, In fact the moment Helen and Robert Oakley entered her culinary department was a momentous one — or would be — if twenty-five or thirty mightily hungry stomachs were compelled to "bite" even a few minutes longer, owing to the interview, and it is a safe bet no other would have got it.

But Oakley was, from the day he went there, of all the boarders a favorite. Not that he did anything in particular to incur favoritism. He had at times tenderly referred in the presence of Mrs. Sontag to his dead mother, and sympathized with his landlady when he saw her head tied tightly with a white band.

Nature had taught this mining boy that to win Woman's love, if single, proceed as per circumstance

and opportunity, if married kiss her baby - if she has one - and commiserate with her on her physical ills, if she has nothing more tangible on which to bestow attention. But he did it sincerely - as you must do - else she find you out. Other times he had met her half way when helping "Yoccup" with water, all of which endeared him to her heart. He was kind — to every body; at his tongue's end a ready word of sympathy for the distressed, and it came as easy to him as barking to a dog. Yet with the best of them the boy would turn a fluent, limpid oath when nothing else proved available to full expression of what he felt regarding a refractory machine underground, or an uncharitable, sneaky act of anyone above it. With the rest of them he would take a drink of "red-eye" on occasion, usually "Fourths" and Christmases, other times but rarely, and never more than left him joyously sober and over-indulgent and kind. So if any of our readers, pursuant on such information as we have already given, have formed a wrong impression of Robert Oakley, and contemplated placing him in their list of saints, let them now and forever erase his name and their desire. This Child of the Mine was human, and fallible, with about as finely balanced proportions of goodness and badness as it is safe for any one man to exhibit on this earth. If he give more of the former it were as well to keep a weather eye open, unless he be of such as follow Christ in all things, even to sacrificing on the altar of Human Love the love of Woman, and the normal pleasures of a home and little children. But this class are good by choice and profession, and have naught to do with the wresting of reluctant strata.

Mrs. Sontag wiped her hands on her apron, and filled a huge rocker which she kept in the kitchen as a reminder of comfort, and idle times to come. She never used it, there, for the purpose it was intended.

She smiled, a big, fat, satisfied, motherly smile at

the pair, and Oakley returned the compliment.

Helen was half scared, and could hardly acknowledge the introduction of "Helen Roberts" and "Mrs.

Sontag."

But it all ended quite nicely at last; and when Mrs. Sontag was satisfied that Helen wasn't Oakley's girl nor his wife —which fact wasn't obvious to the woman's phlegmatic perception simply by the name bestowed, she assigned her to help the other girl. This she took care to assure her was more on account of Oakley than because she needed another helper. And although Helen Roberts was of a very sensitive and independent spirit, she was so hopelessly crushed just then by force of adverse circumstances that she allowed the matter to adjust itself, and set about doing her duty to the mistress and men of "Sontag's Boarding House."

Thus The Wanderer became settled for the time being at least. Night waned to day, and even before dawn Helen was called to commence the daily grind of a

mining boarding house.

In the evening the men came up from the mine. Principally they were men who loaded the coal into the little cars underground, put in holes they drilled the explosives to blast it down onto the mine floor, and heaved back the death-dealing slate out of the way of the "machines." Perhaps half-a-dozen had to do with this latter phase of mining, Oakley among them.

The men, not less than Mrs. Sontag, generally liked him. For favor or sullen enmity is allotted the newcomer in an incredibly short time where men come constantly in personal contact during and after working hours. Each man's idiom is imitated, his fund of learning or lack of it, his physical prowess — judged chiefly by the amount of work performed — and the general peculiarities of the several personalities become

as an open book.

From the wash-room, situated in the basement below the dining-room, the men filed in, clothed in indifferently clean clothes, absolutely clean bodies from the feet up, newly-combed hair and the agreeable aroma of pine-tar soap, all lent a feeling of buoyancy and general good-fellowship. Each sat in his designated place at the table — a long, oval thing capable of seating comfortably twenty or thirty men - and without preliminaries discussed the steaming food. plates only lacked large pieces of meat - for the day was Friday, and the Catholic miner, swear as he will, is generally more zealous in his religious observances than his Protestant brother. But the paucity of protein in one form was amply provided for in another. Fresh fish and eggs served in abundance made good the deficiency.

Two newcomers were added to the number this

evening, one of them named Bennet.

The meal went on apace. The rapidity with which vast quantities of meat and vegetables disappeared would have brought envy to the heart of a dyspeptic millionaire. For a while silence, except for the continuous rattle of knives and forks, prevailed. But the

first sharp pangs stilled, conversation began, and becoming general, many a hearty sally and sequent laugh added gayety to the meal.

Helen had been put to serving the table, bringing thence as needed from the kitchen adjoining replenished platters of eggs and meat, or bowls of soup and potatoes, which she distributed at various points most convenient.

Oakley and Bennet sat opposite each other, and at the moment Helen came behind the latter his plate was empty. And it was the sudden crook and out-thrust of his elbow, perhaps more than the carelessness of the girl, which sent splashing down his broad back the hot, greasy semi-liquid soup!

It might have been because the roar of laughter which shook the table set the man's temper afire, or perhaps he really meant what he said, but in charity we incline to the former supposition, that he retorted so viciously to Helen's "I beg your pardon," as she stooped to pick

up the broken bowl.

Other than that the great burly fellow said nothing. He pushed his chair back from the table, and ridded himself of the clinging cloth. Helen removed her apron and held it forth, even attempting herself to wipe the smudge away. He pushed her roughly aside, at first without speaking. Helen still stood there, not knowing just then what else to do. If she went he might call her, and it was her duty to obey the men's commands, if reasonable. She waited.

Most of the men had resumed eating. It takes a very serious occurrence to dampen a miner's appetite even when partly sated. Bennet threw his coat vehemently to the floor, and looked at the cowering,

frightened girl as if he would like to take physical revenge on her — or worse — Helen's hand touched his chair back, her arm, bared to the wrist only, quivering

with agitation.

Oakley from the opposite side stopped eating, and watched sharply the melo-drama being played between these two, both almost equally strange to him, with an interest intense, if a rapidly changing color were a criterion.

"Shall I take your coat and clean it?" came again in a slightly quivering voice, and Oakley remarked the same drawn lines he had seen on Helen's face before.

The man turned on her as a dog to another who

tries to sneak his bone.

"Go clean yourself, you dirty b—h!" he snarled, and went on eating as complacently oblivious of the result of his sentence as if he had addressed it to a mule in the mine instead of a sensitive human being and a woman.

The girl turned away quickly, her breast heaving as

she went through the door to the kitchen.

The other girl finished waiting on the table for that meal.

AND WHAT BECAME OF IT.

Thy form benign, oh, goddess, wear;
Thy milder influence impart,
Thy philosophic train be there,
To soften, not to wound, my heart;
The generous spark extinct revive;
Teach me to love and to forgive;
Exact my own defects to scan,
What others are to feel, and know myself a Man.
— Gray.

SUPPER ended in silence, as far as Oakley and Bennet were concerned. While the women gathered the plates the men generally grouped about a huge tree whose limbs overhung the dining-room yard. Some squatted for a game of seven up. Others picked out the evening papers from the heap of mail just deposited on the grass by one of their number who had been to the village. A few of the older men sat on the stoop, plucking straws from a broom with which to cleanse the rank surplus of their pipes.

Oakley wasn't there. Immediately after supper he had gone to the kitchen. Helen and Mrs. Sontag were washing dishes when he entered, the distress of her mind plainly evident on the younger woman's face.

The boarding mistress turned as she heard his steps behind her. Helen changed her position to partly hide her face. Before Oakley had time to make known his mission the elder woman spoke.

"Dis poor girl vas sdrange, Meester Oakley; she

pe homesick, maype."

Helen neither affirmed nor denied her surmisings. Home doubtless was a factor in her sorrow, but a small one. Oakley tipped his hat as he approached her. He was the only one at Sontag's I ever knew who could do it without obvious embarrassment.

"May I speak to you a moment, Miss ---." He

started.

Helen laid the dish from her hands and wiped them with a towel. Unconsciously brushing back her hair, she followed him to the door.

"Did you — did you — er —," Oakley faltered, half ashamed to broach such a subject. Gathering fortitude he blurted suddenly: "I suppose you heard what that fellow, I think they call him 'Bennet,' said?"

Helen's face colored deeply. "Yes, I heard, but —"

Oakley surmised her meaning. "You don't want no trouble?" She nodded, her nod a negation.

"Well," he said soothingly, "I'll see that you don't have any — if he'll apologize as publicly as he said it."

He looked over to Caroline Sontag for her approval. Helen was at the dish bench, her back turned to the pair.

"What do you say, mother?" he whispered.

Mrs. Sontag let her eyes range from the youth's feet to the top of his heavy hair shock. She came closer with: "You petter do them dishes, Heleen."

The pair walked to the door; or at least one did.

Mrs. Sontag waddled, but it wouldn't have been healthy to tell her that. They stopped at the top of the steps, and Oakley whispered what had passed. "I had a mother, once——" he said.

"An' a seester?" asked the matron, with her hand

on his shoulder.

"And a sister," he added; "two of 'em."

Mrs. Sontag thought a moment.

"Vell, Heleen's der t'ird . . . und dees is mine poardin' house, und eef he'll 'pologize —— don't und eef he won't, do dott ——!!

Her big, fat fist doubled, and hit the other a resound-

ing crack.

"Dott vill learn heem to pe der gentlemans allretty."

Oakley was partly down the steps when she shook her big fist at him, and gave him a final order, meanwhile rolling up her right sleeve and baring an arm like a shank a beef.

"Gutt luck, Bopp! und eef you don't lick heem you get anudder lickin', und anudder poardin' blace," and Oakley went off smiling, knowing she didn't mean it — all.

Bennet was passing nearby as Oakley stepped down the path in search of him. The former was ahead and had just reached the large yard at the back of the boarding house when Bob called to him. Bennet turned,

and stopped.

No other of our men at Number Four Shaft could ever compare with Bennet in bull-dog beauty. As he stood waiting for Oakley to state his business, his feet set well apart, his huge chest thrown well out, his shoulders squared, he looked the typical "pug." A cutty pipe uptilted in his jaws, and almost burnt the edge of a cap set a la miner mode over the left eye. Jim Peterson only could take on a more belligerent expression, and Peterson's was more accidental than natural. Somebody had gouged out an eye, and nature had made him baldheaded; and as if this weren't enough of "fighting-mark" to add to one body, a premature shot one day made as many hieroglyphics in blue across his mine-pallid features as the face of a Yucatan temple bears, and set his nose off at a one-third angle and left it there. Poor Peterson! he was a single man too, and deserves our pity. Bennet doesn't, so we'll proceed to make him take his medicine.

When Oakley called he immediately stopped, his burly form looming against the fading light. The light was the only thing that made any pretence at fading of the three. It was quite obvious to Oakley that he had a hard nut to crack. But the big machine runner was no soft-shell himself — only with Helen. Here was somebody that was worthy all of his atten-

tion. He got it.

The men stood within two feet of each other.

"That girl," started Oakley, "is badly cut up over

what you said to her."

"What the h—l do I care," retorted Bennet, shifting his still lighted pipe to his pocket. The ugliest man treasures his facial beauty, be it never so small.

Oakley tried vainly to frame words that would induce the man to care, to go to Helen and apologize for his utterance; but his tongue was utterly at variance with his desire. Several times he started, stammered something, almost inaudibly, then stopped. His brow grew wet, and as he wiped away the perspiration Bennet broke into a leering grin. The smoldering fire leaped instantly into flame.

"She deserved all she got said to her," continued Bennet, abruptly facing Oakley as if to question the latter's right to interfere, "the clumsy b——!" Then:

"What cher goin' ter do 'bout it?"

Oakley stared for an instant strangely; his body trembled as with the ague. The air around both men was still and quiet, broken only by the subdued hum of voices coming from the other side of the house. From a lane leading to the pit shaft came the plaintive notes of harmonica reeds trilling sweetly "My Old Kentucky Home;" strange contrast in so short a space: the boarding-house choreboy lightening his labor by crude, yet harmonious strain; within the house peace; without, men in all manner of relaxation restful after a strenuous day: within arm's length two human giants glaring at each other, the prelude of combat glinting from eyes sharp as a tiger's, muscles as rigid as their stare was tense.

Oakley moved a step quickly, his clenched hands shot up, and, almost before the last foulness had left the other's mouth, Bennet received a stunning blow on the face. "That's what I'm goin' to do," Bob hissed, his voice a tremble, his feet moving him quickly to a more advantageous footing.

For a moment Bennet staggered, but an instant later regained his equilibrium and composure sufficient to call Oakley a name reflecting on the character of the mother who bore him, and a title that no man cares to accept if spoken in anger. The words but added fuel to the fire of Oakley's wrath, as Bennet spat them out with a mouthful of blood, and before his head was raised the men were locked in embrace that meant victory or defeat for one of them. Over and over they rolled, first one and then the other gaining a slight advantage. And in an instant cards, papers, pipes, were all forgotten as the certain noise of human frenzy reached the miners' ears. Some — the older men — would have parted the combatants, but the most intrepid among the crowd seemed not over-anxious for the job. To the younger men the affair was blissful. Their blood stirred at the sight. Anything they could do to urge the fight to a finish was not left undone, cheering Oakley, then Bennet, according as either gained a slight ascendency. The cause with them mattered not.

Fully fifteen minutes the combatants surged forth and back, now up, now down, blood streaming alike from both. Of the two Bennet seemed the stronger,

but was handicapped in agility.

By a clever hold Oakley threw the other heavily to the ground, and, as he fell, fell upon him. Bennet's head struck a hard substance, his massive jaws snapped shut, his face turned livid, his eyes rolled, his muscles convulsed.

"He's killed!" exclaimed several in unison.

"Not much danger," another prognosticated with a knowing grin, and a look of contempt directed at Oakley. "Bennet's too tough a lad to be killed that easy . . . don't worry, boys . . . don't get yer shirts off," he admonished the group bending over the man stretched at full length. "He's been in many

a wuss scrap than that," came the contemptuous finality. Evidently the man knew him, and what he needed. "Bring him some 'red-eye,' quick! Somebody!!" Despite his assurance Bennet's "butty"

began to show alarm.

One of the men brought water, but another was quicker with the miner's panacea, of which Bennet was urged to drink nearly half a pint. The miner's resusciation is, like their lives, a strenuous affair. In a short time he raised himself to a sitting posture, and gazed in a dazed and sheepish manner at the crowd. Oakley stood at a distance, wiping away blood from his face. Bennet rose slowly to his feet and walked over to where he stood.

"Shake, pard," he said, quietly; "you're the first

feller to put me down and out."

Oakley took the proffered hand and shook it heartily. smilingly telling Bennet his coat was on fire. He was glad that matters were no worse; that Bennet had come out as he had done himself: apparently without serious injury.

The stir created by the incident soon subsided; "scraps" were not infrequent around the mine. The men, generally, resumed their play; Oakley went to his room to straighten up; Bennet went to the kitchen.

"Dond you pe makin' more drubble," said Mrs. Sontag, as he strode towards Helen. The latter turned pale, but the elder woman moved quickly, frying pan in hand, between her and the cause of her discomfiture; and had you known Mrs. Sontag as I, you would concur with me that she and a frying pan were a bad combination for anyone hunting trouble. In all probability

the Trouble Hunter would be likely to find the game he was after. But as to the man's intentions the women were mistaken.

Bennet fumbled clumsily for his hat. "I'm sorry, Miss fer what I said in the dinin' room; I'm goin' to 'pologize."

The color came back to Helen's face, and Mrs. Sontag moved silently over to the washstand. Helen

was trembling yet when she spoke.

"That's all right," she said kindly; "you were badly provoked. I'm awfully sorry it happened." Helen held out her hand, and Bennet took it in his coalscarred and calloused own and clumsily bowed himself out.

* * * * * * * *

As far as Oakley and Helen were concerned the incident was apparently forgotten. Neither referred to it. Life in Sontag's boarding-house went on in its usual way. New lodgers came and old ones went away to more congenial workings, real or fancied. As is the way of miners, some made a change at the end of a few months, regardless of conditions present or possible. Several of the mechanics went back to the distant state they had come from; Oakley, however, had had his stay lengthened considerably over the originally allotted time. To the most casual observer the cause was plain: he loved Helen. And here it is appropriate to say that Helen had done nothing to encourage it, other than show her gratitude for Oakley's kindness in the only way open to her.

It lies within the province of a boarding-house girl to do much for a favored one. This, where there are many young men and one or two young women, is sometimes productive of ill-feeling. This case, however, was a pleasant exception. By common assent Oakley had fairly won the privilege of exclusive companionship with the new girl, if the new girl gave specific privileges to any one. Bob had clean towels oftener than any other whose duty called him amid the dirt and grease; the choice portions of meat were carried near his end of the table — accidentally, perhaps, but frequently - and trifles never before known to do such unseemly tricks crept between the bread in his dinner pail. Helen's natural modesty precluded any demonstration of gratitude in more open manner. And, even had this been possible, visions of another she loved lying weak and injured in a distant hospital would have had a determining effect.

From the latter, indirectly through her stepmother, Helen had received a letter on which the Miss looked uncommonly like Mrs., and the envelope falling into Mrs. Sontag's hands first had prompted not a little curiosity on the part of the boarding-house matron.

Mrs. Sontag's knowledge of English was very limited, but she made out that much. Helen smiled and made an explanation which quite set at rest — temporarily at least — the genial mistress's fear of a masquerader, and from thenceforward the two women seemed to have many more things in common, and got along even better together, having found, apparently, that they had an uncommon bond of sympathy regarding certain phases of feminine life.

AN UNLAWFUL PASSION.

I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

The planets know their own and draw,
The tide turns to the sea;
I stand serene midst nature's law
And know my own shall come to me.

- ANON.

SINCE the trouble with Bennet, Oakley had tried several times to frame an excuse to get Helen away from the house. The mine boarding-house doesn't offer the best facilities for Youth and Maid on tender phrases bent. She was affable when they chanced to meet, but the conversation was always of a general nature. But every word she uttered, spite of the frequent smiles, vibrated with a melancholic sadness. Oakley was of quick perception, and this deep-lying, and to him unaccountable, sorrow, grieved him. He couldn't understand why one so young should seem at

times so sad. Helen sometimes would cast aside depression; but whelming sternness, surprised and routed for the instant, would return renewed; exuberance of

youthful spirit would vanish from her face.

It was Sunday. From a point of vantage among the thick maples clustered back of the house Oakley caught a glimpse of Helen through an uncovered window. She had been a frequent attendant at church, when at home, and from Mrs. Sontag had inquired the way to the local house of worship. Her work for the day was over, and Helen determined to attend the evening service. She had gone upstairs to her room which faced the woodedge.

Oakley had come from a neighboring mine. Sunday had made no interruption there in the feverish installation of undercutting machines. The process, as was quite natural, had in it much interest for the young man. We may taboo "shop," but our ears are ever alert for its familiar sounds. And the chief topic of all topics with the miner is mining in its varied phases. But as he turned the bend in the sulphur-covered road the matter of compressed air versus electricity, as the better displacer of the human arm and two-pointed pick, became altogether non-existent. The great hole in the ground had been immediately filled by the vision in Mrs. Sontag's window. For awhile Oakley stood still to watch it.

A gentle wind, tinged slightly with the coming frost, wafted a sweet sound from distant bells. The day was declining, the wood's dark shadow shutting out the red disc sinking beyond the college town to the west. It was this shadow cast by the leafy branches of a

huge maple brushing her window, on which Helen had depended for the shutting out of obtrusive gaze. She made no allowance for the extra keenness of the eyes of Love, which in keen perception often give the lie to a proverb. The only sound breaking the almost virgin stillness came in a purr-like hum from the huge ventilators whirling rapidly above Number Four's air shaft. Occasionally a clatter of hoofs and wagon wheels on the dusty streak of yellow skirting the north side of the village told of a farmer's family conveyed over long distance to the house of prayer. The last peal from the bells died away; in a half hour they would ring for commencement of worship.

Oakley walked rather impatiently, or, to be precise, in trepidation, out along the path he knew Helen would take, if her toilet meant negotiation of the two miles intervening between Sontag's and the college town.

The vision in the window still continued — unknowingly — to play with his heart strings. He sat down at length to watch it. With the aggravating slowness common to womankind, Helen adjusted her ribbons and furbelows, set on her hat, and having called on the other girl, and found her engrossed in a fictitious depiction of "A Young Girl's Wooing," stepped outside and along the path which Oakley had taken before her.

He walked slowly, very slowly, and she, assured by Mrs. Sontag that she would get there just in time to come back, walked fast. She overtook him round a turn, and the sly rogue stepped aside as politely and nonchalantly as if he had no idea of going with her—until then. Love is a shrewd dissembler in male as

well as female, and our miner youth learn, somewhere, the subtle art more easily than gaseous affinities and atomic weights.

"Hello!" he said, "you goin' to church, too?"

"Yes," said Helen, and wavered a moment. Then not finding in her heart any sensible reason for returning she pressed forward.

"So'm I," he returned emphatically, and walked ahead of her until there was room for them to walk

abreast.

"It'll be dark," he suggested tentatively "and you

can come back, too, with me."

The girl eyed him sharply with her piercing black eyes, questioning many things, uncertain as to all. She lapsed into silence and accompanied him on faith.

They walked slowly over the intervening distance and reached church a few minutes late. At the close

of service they returned the same way.

The moon had come out, making the night beautiful. On the tree sides facing its light it shimmered silvery, transforming the sombre aspect of the dense foliage, and making even more beautiful the unusually fair features of Helen.

Neither said much. Helen's thoughts were far away: she was unusually preoccupied — this night. The church service, the song, and the melancholic atmosphere on the homeward way all tended to depress. Robert Oakley was also preoccupied, but his thoughts were altogether of a different theme. Twice he had taken a strong-smelling stogie, common to the mining town, to his lips, and without lighting either, thrown them away. It is doubtful if he remembered doing so.

The occasional touch of the soft fair body beside him, fragrant in her pure cleanliness and an uncommon delicacy as regarded an odor used in feminine toilet, intoxicated his every sense. Her silence - which he took all for diffidence, instead of rightly but a part and the translucent ether which enwrapped that form, but added to the mystery and potency of Love. Several times Helen had been at the point of telling her companion certain things which would have undoubtedly broken the magic, and just as frequently the modesty and natural diffidence of girlhood overcame the prompting in the other direction, and she continued to speak only of other, and more general things. Moreover, certain bodily feelings had raised an additional barrier between her and a closer confidence. acquiescence thus far to his will had been but a continuation of the gratitude characterizing her every action toward Oakley since the ever memorable encounter with Bennet. In her heart Helen felt — but could not have explained to him had she desired — toward Robert Oakley exactly as she thought she would toward a brother having the same qualities. Had the young man been other than he was she would, no doubt, have found it much easier to be franker.

They had left the highway and were crossing the

fields intervening.

By the path side were many Fall flowers, showing plainly in the moonlight. Oakley picked several as he walked in the grass, that Helen's feet might remain dry on the foot-wide bareness. With a stem of timothy he entwined them and gave to her.

"Thank you," she said, "I love flowers," placing

them in a buttonhole on her bosom, and inbreathing

deeply, as she bent, of their fragrance.

"So do I," Oakley responded, his strong heart and voice a-flutter with contemplated action. He put his hand near the flowers, and his fingers felt for one fleeting moment the thrill engendered by the female breast when The Virility of Pure Manhood abounds in every drop of blood, and the Man-Heart leaps at the Call of The Sex. The thrilling magnetism shook him as the mine current, but in a different way, but only for a moment. Helen pushed his hand vigorously away.

Undaunted he attempted to put his arm through her's, only to be repulsed. This dampened Love's

ardent flame for awhile, but not for long.

They were again in the stretch of woods where he had waited for her. The lights in the boarding-house, which could be seen on the farther side, were nearly all out. They had lingered long, much longer than necessary for youthful steps to cover the distance traversed, and much against Helen's will. Several times she had gone forward, leaving Oakley still walking slowly, but becoming timorous each several time had waited his coming, choosing his aggravating dalliance rather than the possessive fear of Night.

Helen felt poignantly — then — based on the mine country standard, the unconventionality of her allowing him to accompany her that night. Although in a certain sense the ethics of "refined," "cultured" society do not obtain in our purely mining communities, yet emphatically not less virtuous are these women of

the mines, speaking generally.

The exigencies of locality and state require less adamant in the visible social fabric, and perhaps, in equity,

more in that portion *invisible* to the interested observer. While we are not always right when we judge by motive, neither, unless they be also explained, may we give impartial opinions always if we judge by results. Being human gives us all the prerogative of erring. Helen was very human, and very young.

For the first time she felt a vague alarm in Oakley's presence; natural intuition leading her to expect what was too late to forestall. And she was right in her

presumption.

Somewhat nervous she trembled slightly, and Oakley mistook it for cold. He put his overcoat over her shoulders and she threw it off. Instead of daunting this emboldened him. He thought it the simple vagary of an immature woman, and followed up his action by asking her for a kiss, and added: "If you don't, I'll take it anyhow."

The girl burst into tears, and Oakley contritely asked what he had done to give offence, and she added

to the puzzle by telling him, "Nothing."

Following this both lapsed into silence, and remained so until Helen had regained composure and the pair a more friendly attitude. They reached the wood, Oakley suggesting meanwhile that he had an idea girls couldn't stand to be far away from home as well as young men. "It comes natural to me, now," he told her, attempting to fill in the long pauses in which she said nothing.

He had to put in his time somehow, poor fellow. He was too intent on making love to Helen, and Helen was too intent on preventing it, to allow him to even smoke with ease. So that one word brought on another, and

all of them his own, until he had told her all about himself, his home, his late parents and the only sister living, and ever so many things a young man bent on gaining a young girl's pleasure will tell her. I do believe he'd have told her the moon was green cheese if she would have paid for the lie by a kiss. But they reached the end of the wood, and Sontag's boarding house lights came into view, which perhaps saved Oakley from becoming desperate. He had but one card left and he played it.

He ran ahead of her up the steps leading to the only door that was left unfastened, and, hand on latch, waited the girl's pleasure to ascend and pass him. She sensed his purpose and hesitated, about them both the night silence, and in each a hard-beating heart. In one of the tree-tops an owl voiced his weird call, and the chug! chug! of Number Four Shaft air fan struck

dully against the dark wood.

"Are you goin'?" she asked, her face only half turned to him in the moonlight.

"I'm waitin' on you," he added tauntingly.

Then the pair again resumed their silence. Oakley evidently determined to compel her to pass him or

make an outcry to Mrs. Sontag.

At the start Helen was just as determined she would do neither. She still stood with her face turned only to him in part, afraid to turn her back on him. She had seen him leap down that flight of steps with a panther's ease, his feet resting where she stood. She kept digging her shoe toe in the grass and he kept smiling roguishly down at her.

"Are you comin', Helen?" he asked at length, with

that characteristic familiarity of our men.

Helen continued to tear up grass with her shoe toe and say nothing.

Then after a considerable length of time he flung

down:

"I'm still waitin'."

And she flung up, with the tiniest semblance of a smile at his audacity:

"I see you are."

Oakley laughed gently at this, although you won't,

not being in the same position waiting for a kiss.

Helen didn't. She was getting angry. The air was sharply cold, which of itself would explain what is perhaps already a known truth to you, that Love can be cruel as well as kind to the object of its desire. Several times there came to the girl's lips a sentence, but she, getting angrier all the time, and being a spunky piece of femininity, bit the murmured words in two and said aloud:

"No! I wont tell him — now;" and still lower: "I should think that he could see —I am—" Helen had not heard that Love is supposed to have poor eyesight when occasion demands blindness.

"What did you say?" came quietly from the top of the steps; and from the bottom:

"It's none of your business, Mr. Oakley!" Then: "Why don't you go on upstairs?"

The long form bent, and a low voice whispered: "Where, to Helen's room?"

This put the cap on the climax. The girl put a foot on the bottom step, and hesitated.

"Come on," Oakley invited; "I'm trapper-boy* to-

night."

He flung the door open, and Helen went up, muttering almost beneath her breath, since she recalled vividly another scene in which he gave the lie to her words:

"I thought you wasn't a gentleman."

Evidently the youth didn't hear that. If he did he was so intent on another purpose that he allowed the

girl's half-hearted insinuation to go by default.

Perhaps desperate at the result of his first love-making Oakley placed himself in a good position to steal the favor he had been denied fairly, and he got it! and enjoyed its fleeting sweetness no doubt, and tried to get another. Helen didn't, apparently, for stubborn to the last she placed her hand against his body and, with much sudden exertion, sent him with the nectar still on his lips, tumbling down the steps to the ground—that sward where Bennet and he had spilled blood because of her.

"No, you must not!" came the inflexible reply, and unchanging; which to Oakley, in view of the attitude accompanying, was entirely superfluous. And without further explanation Helen left him to reflect on the evening's happenings, nor even thanking him for his courtesy in seeing her safely home.

Such are the vagaries of Woman. God bless her!

^{*} The little boys who open the large doors for the mule-trains or motors to pass are called "trappers" in mine parlance.

"SOMEBODY'S WIFE."

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many ways that wind and wind,
While just the art of BEING kind
Is all this sad world needs.

—A POSTAL CARD VERSE.

related, Helen sat in a room adjoining the kitchen. Eight hours had passed since the last miner had removed his pail from the bench and betaken himself to the shaft. From now until supper's preparation her time was her own. By Helen's side was a little table on which she was writing to Roberts, in care of Jennie. The latter was an intimation that the ensuing week Helen would pay a visit, Mrs. Sontag willing, to Pittsburg, including in her itinerary the hospital and her former home, expressing hope that she would not only be able to see Roberts, but talk to him long, as she had many explanations to convey as to her actions in the past weeks.

In the letter to her sister she placed some money, keeping only sufficient to satisfy her few simple needs until the next wage became due. She folded and sealed it to await evening, when one of the men, perchance going that way, would carry them to the postoffice.

Later Helen resumed her labors in the kitchen. Several times during the afternoon the kind, motherly woman with whom she worked inquired the cause of evident distress. She had, moreover, cast sly glances which caused a blush to cover the younger woman's face, and a sudden adjustment of the wrapper covering

her person.

But feminine surmisings scorch the female mind. They must know. Since the first mother in Eden set the example, her daughters, famous, rich, obscure, or poor, have rarely made exception. Before supper Mrs. Sontag had ceased surmising; she knew. To her Helen told the story none but herself and he lying in the hospital knew; and the elder woman's face beamed smilingly as she heard the truth: she had anticipated other things. She bade the girl cease her troubling, the baby should be her child and theirs, so long as the father remained unable to care for it and Helen.

Following her adventure with Oakley Helen had not gone from the house. Except at meal times — and very rarely then, for the other girl had of late been delegated by Mrs. Sontag to wait on the table — the diningroom never knew her presence. Primarily this had been prompted by surreptitious glances from the hardier male members of this transient household, and a surge of blood to Helen's face which followed had remained until she reached the kitchen. Mrs. Sontag had noted this, and for some time past Helen had been sent upstairs at meal time. Oakley she had studiously avoided; and he, sensitive and proud as she, and in a sense penitent for his Sabbath escapade with the girl, had not urged his company; and thus matters stood, awaiting the coming crisis in more than one life.

It was Saturday afternoon. The week-end holiday had brought the miners out earlier than usual. Nearly

all were busily engaged shaving, shining shoes, or tidying clothes preparatory to an evening in the nearby

town, or for their trip home — if married.

Helen, waiting them to vacate their rooms, sat for a few minutes' rest in one she had just completed cleaning. On a chair, where she had thrown it while sweeping, lay a city paper. She picked it up to read until the men in the room adjoining should be gone. The usual fires, murders, accidents, and politics, which every day occupy so much space in the chronicle of human events, she glanced rapidly over, yet many of them were horri-

fying news items.

The girl's attitude as these stereotyped phrases in which the papers tell of this or that life being "ground out by an engine running light," or "the man stepped onto the north bound rails without noticing the flyer coming south," may best be characterized as languid. To the average reader they are so frequent in appearance as to become monotonous, doubtless a part in God's Great Scheme that poignant sorrow shall not be universal in specific case. In these extremes of human misery each must bear his or her own soul burden, cry he never so soul-rending when the burden unexpected fall. The four line paragraph which to your eye brings no tear, to your body no tremor, wrings, so to speak, tears of blood from some other soul vitally interested. It was one of these which suddenly passed before Helen's eyes. Almost hidden among other articles it lay singing silently its ominous note:

The body of George Roberts, a man who died recently at ——Hospital from injuries received on the P. M. Y. & C. Railroad, was buried by the City Authorities to-day. The man had given no address, and no one claimed his body.

The paper was a week old!

The shock came to Helen as a swift-moving metallic object does to a human body. At first the girl just sat there, numbed, not sensing the full depth of her wound. She looked again at this conveyor of ill, as she had done one night before, then she dropped the printed sheet with an exclamation to her God, and started involuntarily toward human aid. She started for Mrs. Sontag; she nearly reached the door and fainted.

Helen Roberts had for good cause looked on this woman as a daughter toward a mother. And Mrs. Sontag proved worthy the title in the fight waged later to keep the young mother and babe from following the

father and husband.

One of the boarders heard her fall, and called up the boarding mistress, stating that "the gurrel's in a fit, or summat!" and in a little while Helen came to herself, and the men were very authoritatively dismissed from further attendance.

The boarding mistress helped her to make ready her

own room.

"Dond vorry, Helen," she whispered, as she turned to go to the dining room. "I get some hot vater, und some plankets, und send dot poy fer der doctor. You yust stay mid you room alretty — everyting pe yet all

right."

Mrs. Sontag went down stairs as she had never gone before: elated with pleasurable anticipation of a baby being in the household, and depressed slightly by the obvious youth of the prospective mother and the shock which had made the girl prematurely ill. She reached the bottom.

"Vere's dot poy?" she called. Then, louder, "Joc-

cup! Joccup!"

"Joccup" came. He was a little fellow who did many chores at the boarding house, being paid little therefor in the coin of realm, but much in care and good, wholesome food. His mother had passed away before he knew her; his father "batched" in a shanty nearby.

Mrs. Sontag bent to the boy and whispered hoarsely:

"Run vor der Doctor Myers, quick, Joccup; and

dell him der gom quick to Meestres Sontag."

"Joccup" dropped his bucket, the contents spilling in promiscuous heaps on the floor. Usually this would have brought a resounding smack, or, at least, a hearty "dutch" scolding, but the lapse passed unnoticed in the present crisis.

"Be you sick, Mrs. Sontag?" inquired the boy, as he turned to go, his young eyes twinkling roguishly.

"Neffer you mindt!" she exclaimed, her big hands

outstretched to shake him.

But "Joccup" was nimble. In a bound he jumped from the doorway to the ground, leaping the same steps that had divided our Romeo from his Juliet, a distance of more than six feet; for the rear of the house gripped the hillside; the front was set on piles.

"Gee! she's not so sick, either!" exclaimed the boy, as he "made tracks" for Dr. Myers'. "But there'll be two patients if I don't get him in a hurry, an' I'll be

one of 'em."

Jake climbed a worm fence, and was halfway across a field when he heard a lusty voice: "Run! Joccup, run!!" the whole a harsh crescendo of urgency.

It had effect on Jake; he hastened appreciably, and soliloquized as he ran: "Golly, that's not ser bad neither fer a dyin' Dutchman; if she kin do that well at that distance she'll be 'most alive when I come back."

And so she was, bustling hither and thither, adding a feeling of mirth to all about her. An hour passed

before the doctor arrived.

"Premature, but the child will live," he said. Then, aside to Mrs. Sontag: "What has scared this young woman?"

As Helen had explained to her after reviving somewhat from the shock, so Mrs. Sontag explained to the physician. "Quite romantic — quite so, indeed," retorted that gentleman, exhibiting that interest toward such matters as lies deep in the most serious mind. "Quite a romance," he concluded, "but with a sad finale — very sad. But we must not add to the bitterness, Mrs. Sontag," he admonished, almost needlessly we may truthfully say. "We must see that the child and mother have every possible chance to get well. These miners?" he started on another tack questioningly, "are they — that is, do you think they can be kept quiet enough?"

Mrs. Sontag laughed a hearty, robust, deep-chested

laugh.

"Gept quiet! dem? Vy, dogtor, dey'll valk on der hands and knees if dey know Helen pe sick, und Ogeley

he'll valk on hees head if it vill do her goot."

Doctor Myers turned smiling toward the bed in the far corner. "That's quite a compliment, Miss—er—excuse me," he added hastily—"Mrs. Roberts." Then, less seriously: "But we'll be satisfied with just

plain common-sense without the gymnastics in this case, Mrs. Sontag," his eyes yet on the young mother.

Helen smiled back weakly. She made an effort as if to speak, but the physician held up his hand warningly: "Never mind," he said. "You must sleep now."

He took from a vial a number of morphine tablets, with the reiterated injunction that they be given and

the patient kept absolutely quiet.

The mother-love of the portly nurse, so long dormant for want of subjects on which to lavish it, found full vent. Mrs. Sontag had never known the blessing of maternity. Helen and her baby were as if sent to satisfy a desire natural with every woman. That she might better care for Helen, she procured the temporary services of two girls of the neighborhood. A mother could not have been more attentive or kind. Under her homely, but very successful method of caring for the newly-born, little Tressy was brought out of the lethargy of premature birth. In a few days she became a real bright-eyed baby, cooing or crying according as was her mood.

Ten days passed slowly. Helen was sitting up for the first time since her confinement. Mrs. Sontag had brought from the parlor a comfortable reclining chair. Helen lay in a recumbent position, her face pale but richer by the deeper beauty of maternity. The first snowflakes of early winter were falling, shutting from view the towering head-frames above the shaft. A bright coal fire added cheer to what would otherwise have been rather dull environment. Tressy was awake, and had just been taken to her mother's arms from the improvised cradle standing at the bedside, when someone knocked on the door.

"Come in," said Helen, her voice vibrant from recent crying.

The door swung open and Oakley entered the room.

The paleness of the young mother's face mingled with crimson; she held tightly to her breast, with a pardonable feeling of maternal pride, the bundled baby.

Oakley came nearer, somewhat diffident at his own boldness. "Does — does my coming make you feel

bad?" he stammered.

"Oh, no," Helen replied, cheerily; "sit down."

The young man took a chair. "I asked Mrs. Sontag if she'd care, and she said 'No, if you didn't." Helen smiled. Oakley went on bashfully twirling his hat, as he spoke: "I wanted to see — to see the baby a week ago," he blurted, meaning, of course, the baby's mother, "but missis wouldn't let me."

"Mrs. Sontag has been very good to me — like a real mother," Helen sighed, the latter an unconscious expression of regret, doubtless, for lack of that essential

of complete happiness in the home she had left.

"Yes, I — that is — er — Mrs. Sontag has been very good," confusedly acknowledged Oakley. Involuntary egotism came near bringing to light the night trips to the village, after hearing from Mrs. Sontag the story Helen would not tell herself. Inborn manliness instantly asserted itself, and Oakley's gaze shifted from the face of the mother to the child, then to the fire blazing in the grate. Helen had wondered, and was still unenlightened regarding the identity of someone who had called incognia at drug store and doctors with payment for services rendered, and to all inquiries had replied simply: "Just say 'A Friend.'"

"Come closer to the fire," Helen suggested, and Oakley moved his chair from the door. "You're not as devilish this morning as — as that night you were trapper," she taunted, sweetly smiling at his obvious diffidence, as she could well afford to now. He colored like a schoolgirl, and Helen did too. But her manner had won his confidence, and that not unpleasant familiarity.

"Gee, that was fierce, and you married and — and — that way," he said, poking at the crackling lumps of coal which were doing well enough. "But you know

I — that I didn't know, Helen?"

"Of course," the girl acquiesced; "it was my fault—not yours. But I did start several times to tell you, and, and then thought I'd tease you. . . I don't know what made me do it . . . perhaps, well I think it was because I didn't want to . . . "

"Well you certainly did," Oakley returned, throwing his arm over the chair back, and his right leg over his left. His feet were tightly encased in a soft congress kangaroo, and his clothes well fitted, new, and costly, having but the day before come from a nearby tailoring establishment. Our twenty-two-year-old of the American breed are senatorial in everything but grammar, dear Reader, the cartoonist of hebetude to the contrary notwithstanding.

Our "Oakleys" in mature life are our mine foremen, superintendents, and sometimes receive three thousand yearly and expenses for keeping the death

rate as low as it is.

A neat, small patterned gold chain hung in semicircle across his vest, and a pendant, of the same metal, hung from it. A newly-laundered white linen shirt, and a black tie completed a neat, simple, yet rich apparel, which, with his hair combed perfectly in a V shape over his patrician forehead, the clear unsunned complexion quite enviable in a society belle, added the finishing touch to the Picture of Manhood, insofar as concerned the man and his habit.

Set thus in the somber background of an unwindowed wall he sat in silence for some minutes, and Helen's eyelids drooped and her eyes had not moved from her baby's face. Her hand sought its tiny pink feet and found them cold. A small cashmere shawl rested over her shoulders and she took it off, warmed it, and placed it carefully around the tiny legs and toes. A little brooch which had fastened it fell to the carpet, and Oakley bent and picked it up. Its face of gold represented a pair of hearts entwined and a monogram was engraved thereon—

"It was his — George's," she faltered, and turned away her eyes which had suddenly and completely lost the reminiscent smile of her escapade with Oakley.

Oakley's attention went instantly from the room to the snow-covered ground without. Behind him the young mother grieved, for theirs had been great love. Circumstances over which neither had control had made politic, from their viewpoint, a secret union, and a fate more cruel still had wrenched them apart. Both had willed, earnestly, that the fruit of their sacred union should see light in their own home. Thus it came, as it so often does among the poor, that maternity preceded, since it waits not on circumstances social, industrial or otherwise, the home making. Oakley turned and Helen was still crying, silently; the love emblem yet reposing in her fingers. It was evident to the young man's mind that one whose love was so intense as Helen's could bear no division, at least not just then. But it sent a pang through his heart. He loved her, his love modified, to a certain extent, by later events, it is true, but not extinguished. He took from her unresisting fingers the brooch and held it close to his eyes.

"I'd like to take this for friendship's sake," he said,

looking tentatively over at Helen.

"It was his — his mother's," she reiterated, in ner emotion forgetting, and sighed, retrospectively, reviewing the night Roberts had given the little brooch to her; but I guess you can keep it — now — you're goin'

away?"

The young man nodded, and put the little brooch carefully in his pocket, and pulled therefrom a tiny bundle that might have contained anything from a pair of bootees for Helen's baby, to a tightly wrapped shoulder shawl for the young mother. It was carefully tied, and an inscription in pencil said: "A present for The Baby. Please don't open till to-morrow." He put it in the chair behind him, and strode over to the chair in which Helen sat, his big, blue, brave eyes lighting with a protective tenderness common to all elemental manliness.

"Can I take it?" he asked, slightly embarrassed, when Helen looked up into his eyes and smiled. He

meant the baby.

"Why of course," she replied, but she watched carefully his every movement, with an atom of fear that in his giant clumsiness he'd drop the fluffy bundle.

"Gee!" he exploded: "A pretty kid —just like you, Helen."

The girl colored deeply, but didn't reply to his compliment. Her mind seemed in a great degree dazed. He continued: "I—I ought to beg your pardon for what I said that night, but I didn't know you was—you was Somebody's wife, and—and—this his child. I had no idea—"

"I know," Helen assured him, "and it was my fault. But it's all right only — only that," and the sudden trembling which came into her voice suggested thought of Roberts.

It was plain that Oakley had not given up hope of making the girl his wife sometime. He went to the window after returning the child to its mother's lap, and looked out for a long time without speaking, waiting for Helen to cease her audible sorrow. Presently he turned to her and gave her a slip of paper torn from a mine memorandum, strongly impregnated with the odor of toil, and blotched with carbon dust.

"That'll nearly always find me if you'd care to write sometime," and Helen, almost blinded with tears, and verging on hysterical breakdown, just nodded that she would. She had previously learned from Mrs. Sontag that Oakley was going away, having received with his pay an order to report immediately at another point.

He looked at the girl and appreciated the struggle going on, also, the danger of further conversation to one in Helen's condition. It was plain he would have said more, but emotion overcame him: tears came to his own eyes, and made him ashamed. With a bare "Good bye, Helen," he turned to the door and was gone.

The double loss—the companionship, and the knowledge that she had been assured by his presence of a friend—overcame all thought of other things. The package remained unopened and Helen wept her-

self into composure.

Obedient to its commands, which were almost sacred to her, and despite much tormenting curiosity, Helen untied its multitudinous knots the next morning, expecting some slight token dear to the heart of woman. Instead there was a half of his pay envelope, and exactly one half of his pay, and this note:

"Dear Helen: Don't please send this back nor be mad. Blame Mrs. Sontag . . . She told me it was the only remembrance that could be cashed in at the Company Store at anytime it loses its newness, and will be as good then as now, either for you or the baby.

Good bye, from a

bigger baby — Oakley."

VII.

THE FRIENDLESS.

Oh, gently on thy suppliant's head,
Dread goddess lay thy chastening hand,
Not in thy Gorgon terrors clad,
Nor circled with thy vengeful band,
As by the impious thou art seen
With thundering voice and threatening mien,
With screaming Horror's funeral cry,
Despair, and fell Disease, and ghastly Poverty.
—Hood's Ode to Adversity.

THERE is a proverb to the effect that Contempt stalks closely on the heels of Familiarity. This is not the less true of the oft dreaded climax of our earthly existence. Men and women, too, may see, in so many instances, human temples of clay deprived of their immortal parts and become inanimate, that to their eyes the passing ceases to be sacred or profound becomes commonplace and lacks interest. This is especially true of public hospital attendants in peace, and the merciful followers of the cross of red in war.

One whom years of service had given grim acquaintance with such scenes was "Captain" Murphy — captain by virtue of decided military bearing sequent upon service in governmental employ. Passing along the lower corridor of a Pittsburg hospital he met one of the house surgeons. "Hello, Cap! just hunting you," cheerfully exclaimed the physician.

"So?" nonchalantly queried the captain.

The surgeon stopped to relight a cigar held between his teeth.

"Case 28, men's emergency ward, is ready for the dead house," he said, in manner as matter-of-fact as sawyer would receive or give information concerning a specified log ready for the mill. Turning a page in a memorandum he continued, "G. Roberts — railroad case — strange —"

"Sir?" interrogated the Captain.

"Curious coincidence," I said. "Two same name, same ward, don't take the live one," he admonished, grimly smiling.

Each went his way. The captain's mission was soon accomplished; another name was added to the long list

of "Accidentally killed."

The "live" G. Roberts had come out of the lethargy touching on one side the infinite, on the other the living, physical world, in which state visitors would have been denied entrance to his presence. But none came to be denied; Helen couldn't.

When he had grown stronger Roberts had made inquiry regarding any possible communications sent him and not received, and was told a small "blaze" in one of the departments had burnt up a lot of letters awaiting certain patients' recovery, but that any which came in the future were to be put in a safe. This didn't illuminate the gloom of Roberts' particular case, nor, well for his state just then, forebode the sequent ill.

But who shall foretell the result of any human

mistake; how far from the ordinary its winding course shall take us ere the end be reached?

"You are worrying, my man," said the physician. "Try all you can to be patient and composed, since

worry is but keeping you here longer."

Roberts did not tell him the truth. He continued to worry and wonder, surprise growing greater as the days went by. But in spite of all, the vigor natural to youth asserted itself. One fine Spring morning he walked over the Point Bridge to the Furness home, to the address whence had gone all of his letters to Helen.

"They've gone; moved long ago," a neighbor told him. "Where?" She didn't know or care. No

neighborly love was lost between them.

"And Helen?"

The woman's face brightened at the name. "I don't know," she replied, seemingly regretting that she could not give the information desired on this point; "she

went before they did."

The next neighbor knew even less, nor cared. George Roberts had good reason to be aware of the bitterness engendered in the Furness home by the woman who ruled its destiny, but he hadn't any idea of how far that feeling extended. Such as might have been of use to him by their knowledge would have gladly known themselves if they could. One of these was a small grocer on the street corner.

"I'd like to find out the same thing myself, mister," he grinned. "Little good it 'ud do me though, I suppose." Then, drawing up one eye until the two lids almost closed on each other he asked: "Did she leave

you in the hole, too?"

Roberts smiled despite his troubles, at the ludicrous picture the man presented. He replied in the affirmative, not, however, explaining in what kind of a "hole."

Roberts made other investigations, but the result was the same. He went to his old boarding place to get his few belongings. These, however, contained nothing of real value, the more treasured articles being a few

trinkets belonging to his mother and Helen.

Then he slipped away, determined to find work. But the land groaned with panic. Heavy of heart he went to place after place in the city, turning from each with the same negation thrumming dolefully in his ears. Evening came, and with it hunger and weakness more

distressing.

Darkness was come, and labor — which, had he procured, would have been the immediate passport to board and lodging — seemed as far away as ever. The last coin between him and absolute poverty he took from his pocket and looked long and earnestly upon it. He had hoped to spend it for an evening meal, slight, but partly satisfying. His legs refused to carry him much farther, and the next places at which he could hope to obtain employment were nearly five miles away. He boarded a car, and with the reluctancy of a man parting with his last friend he gave the coin in payment for the ride.

* * * * * * * * *

Roberts staggered hopelessly away from the heated and dust-laden air. The last remaining hope of the day had failed to materialize. The deep, pellucid river was nearby, and thither he turned his steps. The sun was down, and all was silent save the booming reverberation of the great engines, re-echoing from the farther side. The deep and musical tones of an up-coming steamboat sounding its whistle for "open lock" at Port Perry added a still deeper color to the dark melancholia eating its way to the young man's soul.

To his soul?

True, for if the last mortal act be one's own destruction, is not the leading cause striking at something more

lasting than the mortal clay?

The murmurs of the broad river were the only sounds to arrest immediate attention. But some black clouds were breaking, and an occasional silvery stream of light from the rising moon shone through upon the water, capping the wavelets with a brilliant sheen; to one of

normal mood an observation of delight.

Trembling with the tumult of conflicting emotions George threw himself down on the sand. His heart was almost breaking — life or death hung tremblingly in the balance. It was but a few steps to complete oblivion of sorrow which for months had silently dogged his every move. But — and a sickening pause possessed him — this would also drown his

hope of Helen!

The day had been soporific; the wanderer tired. From a sitting posture he slid full length on the sandy beach of the Monongahela and slept, to dream an interwoven scene of his mother and his wife, with the vagary and fleeting of exhausted body and mind. Words came again he had not heard since a boy in the western state where, among the dancing mountain air his bookkeeper father sought the health which was

ever elusive. Sentences had passed between husband and wife which but vaguely hinted at an existing enmity afterward ended too late. Sometimes, when they thought him asleep, he had heard the subject approached cautiously, and end in sobs on his mother's

part.

And from it all the boy gathered that somewhere and at some time a hasty temper had done that which cooler thought would have afterward undone - that Nathaniel Ferguson had died unrelenting toward the Scottish foundryman whose daughter he had married, and, unforgiving to the last, had thrust some letters into the fire and returned others. Also that he had later forbade the subject to be mentioned. And the self-imposed wall erected by the father had never been scaled by the son, nor even attempt made to renew acquaintance with an old man, whose days being numbered had sunk his feeling in the interest of a possible grandchild or grandchildren. He had heard indirectly of Ferguson's passing, but not of a later marriage which had given child and mother a new name. He had looked for a Ferguson and missed a Roberts. And although the latter had been in the vicinity for some time, paddling along on his own resources, as the reader knows, until that hour it had never occurred to him to do the seeking. But in his dream he fancied himself doing so, and the fact pleased him, and, he thought, his mother also. This was strange, too. For months past she had hardly a place in his thoughts. Dreaming, he saw her flitting about singing at her task. She had had a sweet voice which he vividly remembered. Yet it was strange this fitfulness of her words and person . . . "And

we shall see how, while we frown and sigh, God's plans

go on as best for you and me . . .

He wondered why the singer paused . . . but then, no . . . people can't sing while steamboats pass by . . . how strange! . . . how did that . . . yes, that was a steamboat, he had heard them hundreds of times going South below Point Bridge with their tows of coal . . but how did a steamboat drag all that coal over that mountain . . . that little creek is too small for a steamboat . . now if it was on that river Mother used to tell me about away out in Pennsylvania — out where Granddad lives . . . oh, pshaw! it's gone back over that hill; and the Voice took up the refrain . . But it was Helen this time! How did she —

"And if, sometimes, commingled with Life's wine, We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink. Be sure a Wiser Hand than yours or mine, Pours out this portion for our lips to drink."

Roberts turned uneasily. "That's all right, Helen . . . that's good! Sing again . . Mother . ."

But not for the weary dreamer or the singer does the voice of commerce cease. Above and to the left, a rushing, roaring, train o'erwhelmed the human voice. George awoke. The train was disappearing in the distance as he raised himself to a sitting posture. Across and directly opposite, a faint glimmer streaked the water from a window's light. From the doorway Roberts could distinguish the emergence of a woman, who, moving about, continued her song:

"Then be content, poor heart!
His plans, like lilies, pure and white unfold,
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold"

He laughed a little at the choral mix-up. "That's strange that — that — they were singing that in my dream, too —"

Once more the strain started and was broken. The water, throwing in manifold intensity the sound of the voice, was ruffled into high commotion. The tug slowly neared the lock. Its puffing ceased; the stentorian voices of the deck hands subsided, and likewise as its hulk was lifted on the inrushing waters to the level above it, a human soul arose in a certain measure from its despondency.

George looked up to the fast-gathering stars. The spacious firmament was now flooded with a full moon's light; the last dark cloud had vanished. He knelt with a swaying body, his hands entwined in a moment's prayer, "Guide me, Heavenly Father — to do — what's right — just now," which, amid the renewed

silence was fittingly preluded:

"And if through patient toil, we reach the land
Where tired feet, with sandals loose, may rest,
When we shall clearly know and understand,
I think that we shall say, 'God knew the best!'"

The singer was done.

The door on the other shore of the Monongahela closed on her person, the light flitted, doubtless into

another room, and, so far as the man who had interestedly watched it was concerned, went out.

Roberts arose, and stood a moment undecided what next to do. And finally, with no particular purpose in view, he went up the slope from the river's channel, much more optimistic than when he had gone down.

A roadway leading into the country skirted the hillside. Beneath an arc light — the last one receiving its power from the huge dynamos at the other end of the borough - Roberts sat down, and for want of something better to do pulled from his coat pocket a little bundle of tranklements wrapped carefully by hands that were no more — his mother's. As a boy he had seen her take each separate article — a picture. square, heavy-framed, of small dimension, having at top a metal ring; a comb of antique design, and well worn, a few newspaper clippings, yellow with age, and such heirlooms as our mothers treasure beyond price, yet which have no present value if we except sentiment. He turned them over one by one, and wondered what on earth had made her keep such things, yet at the same time loath to part with them himself. The clipping containing a paragraph anent the woman's elopement, had been evidently cut from a city paper, but another, when unfolded, was a column, and its inferior, crude typography indicated a home weekly. In the latter his mother was the beautiful daughter of our esteemed fellow-townsman, Andrew McFarlane, Esquire, owner of the McFarlane Foundry, who (without any specific co-relation) employs nearly a score of molders, etc., among them Ferguson."

Roberts laid these carefully back with a sad remi-

niscent smile playing about his wan lips,

He next examined the photograph which, very faded, depicted a man and woman — the latter in crinoline. He had often seen his mother with this picture, but until now never gave it a thought. He eyed the man's features for a father, but as he could recall him it was not he. For one thing the man in the likeness was too old. Also, he was much like the woman, and the latter was certainly Mrs. Roberts. He turned it over, and saw in a heavy hand: "Andrew McFarlane and Sarah: Braddock, Pa."

"That's mother — and Granddad McFarlane!"
Roberts' eyes brightened, and his heart grew light, only to suddenly grow heavy again. But in that instant the

enmity of a life had passed where it belonged.

"If I go he might be dead — or — what's much

worse, disclaim me, perhaps put me out."

He placed the picture away, and started on, hardly knowing where. "It can't take me to — worse," he assured himself.

The rattle of a farm wagon sounded behind him.

He stopped.

"Hello!" a voice from the seat called, "goin' my way?" Then, without waiting for an answer, "Whoa! Jump in!"

George scrambled feebly to the wagon end.

"Lie down, sir! Lie down, sir, I say!"

George thought the man meant himself, and was not loath to follow his command, inasmuch as the wagon bed was filled with straw. But he suddenly changed his mind. There was another occupant. A deep growl convinced him that the man's words were addressed to a huge dog, whose outlines he could discern crouching below the seat of his master.

"Come forward! Come forward! he'll not hurt you now."

Roberts climbed to the seat, and the wagon rumbled

on.

"Goin' far?" queried the driver.

"I don't know," Roberts replied, diffidence filling his mind as the possible failure of his errand appeared.

"That's funny," said the other in sarcasm.

Both men lapsed into silence. Roberts was too exhausted to talk much; his body swayed as he sat on the seat, and he would have fallen off at several jolty places had he not clung desperately to the seat-board edge. He had not felt so weak before. He was first, however, to break the silence.

"Do you know a man up this way named McFarlane?

"Sure I do," the driver of the wagon replied. He turned his gaze to the other: "You look rather weak to work in a foundry — reckon you're huntin' work?"

The rumble of the mills shut out that part of the man's words. He added again: "Have you been sick?"

Roberts told him he had.

"I thought so"; then very cheeringly to a man struggling to overcome a deathlike faintness: "You look

as if another white shirt would do you!"

Roberts tried to smile, but it died on his lips. He spoke feebly, but his words were audible, the wagon having reached a sandy stretch of road. That the man could help in his effort he explained:

"Mr. McFarlane's my grandfather."
"Is that so?" came in intense surprise.

The "twenty men" were more.

"And my name is Roberts ——"

The man looked at him queerly.

"You don't mean to tell me — now — that you're Old Andy's girl's — that is that your mother was Andy's daughter — she that he's been tryin' to find

this long spell?"

"She must have been," Roberts affirmed. "But I never heard of his trying to find — mother." Then: "Her name was McFarlane, and she married Andrew McFarlane's bookkeeper, didn't she?"

The former thought a moment.

"Let me see — well, yes, now I remember, I think Ferguson did work — but here, you ——"

He looked doubtfully at Roberts as one would at

an impostor.

"Didn't I hear you say you was named Roberts?

Roberts Ferguson, I reckon?"

"Just Roberts — George Roberts," the latter corrected. Then, rather impatient at what seemed in his irrational and ill mood downright obtuseness, he adduced:

"Mother was married to David Roberts, about two years after Mr. Ferguson — the man you knew — died. That happened in Colorado, and," with a forced smile, "so did I."

"Well! Now!!" came explosively, and, "Git up,

Charlie! Nell! Git up, here!"

"My step-father was one of the many half-well men in Denver, and followed mother's first husband—the man you knew—my father, in a little while. I can't remember him, but I can mother, although she, too, left me out there a good while before I wanted her to, or she either," Roberts sighed.

"Well," acknowledged the other with a dry chuckle, "we don't seem ter get as much chice as we'd like in that matter . . . but your Granddad'll be tickled ter see you —he's took a notion some time back to find your mother an' you and the rest of yer if there is any, an' I hear's spent a good bit — for him. But he must a' thought you was named Ferguson, an' lived in the West. They say he's advertised, but I've not seen any in our paper . . . "

Roberts listened attentively. When the man paused

he exclaimed:

"I came East in answer to an ad—being out of work in Denver—first to Columbus, then Pittsburg. I met a girl there and—and got married just before I got hurt and sent to the hospital, and that's worried me more than anything else."

"What, gettin' married?" The farmer ha-ha'd and the mirth extended sufficiently to Roberts to bring a

forced smile.

"No," he explained, running on in his confidences further than he had intended; "but she went somewhere in Ohio to some of her folks and I've not heard from her. As soon as I get a little stronger I ——"

A sudden jolt over a huge stone shook the rest of the sentence back, and brought another from the driver:

"H-1! but that's rough!!" whether the wagon

or matrimonial road he didn't say.

Roberts hung on desperately, his body momentarily growing weaker, his muscles lax. As soon as the other man could steady himself sufficiently to get a fair look at his companion during one of the moon-lighted intervals, he muttered semi-audibly: "He does look like

her — sure — " Then aloud: "Did you say you'd been livin' in Pittsburg, too? an' never been up here?"

Roberts nodded, and the driver, with an oblique

glance remarked: "That's strange."

"But only a few months . . I was working as book-keeper in Armstrong's factory until laid off when the panic came."

"An' never come up to see yer Granddad?"

"I intended to — but when I got hit with an engine one morning it knocked a good many things sky-high

. . . but it's never too late to make a start in the right direction," hinting at the wall of indifference born of hatred.

"No; that's right," Roberts' companion responded, following which both men grew silent, for the wagon made noise enough, bouncing up and down with tor-

menting intermittence.

Brushing its left side boards were slender branches of marsh willows. To the right arose almost perpendicular, the dark, semi-mountains skirting the right bank of the Monongahela, going south. In fitful streaks across the water came the reflection from the fiery stacks they had passed on the other bank. From among the wooded stretches above came in dull crashes the echo of ponderous steel. The wagon subsided; sand was death to its garrulity.

The farmer was first to take advantage of the lull to declare: "That'll kill old Andy — er — I mean your

grandfather."

"I hope not," said George.

"I'm afraid it will. He ain't been well at all lately; every trifle upsets him. He's set store on seein' his

daughter, specially since your grandmother died. Your mother was a fine girl, but like her father — set a pitch an' stuck to it. I remember her well," he repeated.

The wagon rattled along, so did the farmer: "The world don't seem to have used you as well as it might," making, as well as the night allowed, an inspection of the young man's clothes.

"Not very well," replied Roberts. His voice trembled appreciably, and again a strange numbness came over him. He clutched tightly at the wagon seat in an endeavor to arrest the irresistible desire his body had to lean forward. The trees looming plainly on the hillside began phantasmagorically to recede into the far, oh, such a far, distance! The deep reverberations grew strangely silent, and all distant noise as well as that of the vehicle beneath him began to weirdly subside with consciousness into oblivion.

Roberts sensed the danger of continuing on the seat, and slipped down onto the straw.

"I believe I'll lie down," he said, "if you quiet that

dog. I feel strange - and weak."

The man did, and drove on, but Roberts was oblivious of the fact. He had fainted, or something approximate; the combined influences of weakness, hunger excessive walking, and to cap it all the jolting wagon, had completed the work. The farmer didn't know, of course — not then. When he reached home he said gladly and kindly:

"We're here, stranger; jump out and we'll have a

bite, an' you'll feel better."

But Roberts didn't jump, nor move. A woman came with a light.

"Hurry up, mother, hurry up!" came the voice from the road.

The woman went speedily to the gate, not without a feeling of trepidation. Mrs. Martin was fearful lest in the course of the day at town her husband had looked once too often through the glass bottom. The occasions on which this happened were very rare, hence dreaded more.

"Is there something wrong with you, Josiah?"

"Nothin' wrong with me, Lizzie," he assured her; but I've a young man here what's sick. He's old

Andy's girl's son — you know Sarah."

The urgency of attendance on the sick man gave pause to the conversation. The woman held the light for a brief moment above the white face, and uttering a fear that he was dead, returned to the house, and from a cupboard brought cordial of her own making. She reached for a cup, then returned to the wagon.

"Give him this, Josiah," she said, "quick!"

Martin held Roberts' head on his knee and gave him some of the wine. Nature slowly asserted itself. The liquid stimulated, and in a few minutes he walked unaided to the house.

"You'll not go to Andy's to-night," they insisted, and Roberts, feeling much need of instant rest, acquiesced.

Mrs. Martin had already prepared a couch for his comfort. A warm, nourishing supper and a soft, well-made bed eased and strengthened the tired body.

Roberts slept long on the following morning. He didn't hear Martin's milk wagon rattle away in the direction of Andy McFarlane's home. He didn't see the disbelief give way before the earnestly-told

incidents of the night preceding. He was unconscious to the breakfastless departure of a trembling old man who had determined to undo much that might have well been left undone years before. But however good his later intentions, this he could not do. He could make amends, but the past was irretrievably gone beyond his changing; just as it is with you and me. But unlike us, perhaps, McFarlane was preparing to profit by his past.

"Wait a minute, Martin," he called to the farmer. "I'll go alang wi' ye to the laddie, an' save auld Tammas

frae hitchin' up."

The two men drove away. Josiah was in amiable mood, but McFarlane was quiet and unusually taciturn. Thoughts of years gone were crowding fast upon him. His only daughter had been very dear to him, in having a disposition so like his own. Though the cares of life had partly displaced the supremacy she once held, the romance of long-forgotten incidents now in its turn overwhelmingly reigned above all else, and glossed over much that had hitherto filled the old man's mind with bitterness. He could see again those hours they sat by the firelight, when he listened with unfeigned joy to her prattling. He could feel again the soft arms as they wrapped themselves about his neck in the days when Youth and he were partners. Scene after scene went in review before him. The last hour had been fraught with violent remorse. Never had he given place in his mind to a settled conviction that he and Sarah were never to meet again. He had felt a softening within himself; hence his inquiries. He believed time would effect a reunion; and now she was gone!

"Anyway," he murmured half aloud, "I'm glad o' that wee bit gude done that boy: it might a'been Sarah's Bubbie . ."

"What'd yer say, Andy?" Martin asked, and the old man looked at him strangely. He had not thought he

spoke aloud.

He told the incidents we already know, and Martin assured him the "Boy" was the same. "He told me so last night," which, indeed, he hadn't. Martin had formed the hypothesis from the facts adduced. McFarlane's face lighted, but he remained silent, while the pair drove on into the brightening day. The East was a ruddy glow. The sun burst over every living thing in full intensity. As he leaned back in the seat he was scarcely sensible of his surroundings. The joy apparent in all animate things was palpable mockery to the diluted misery of his own heart. Martin, by his side, was in a cheerful, even garrulous mood, but his words fell on partly deaf ears.

The vehicle drew up slowly before the house. Through the large pines standing like sentinels at its front the strong winds of early spring sounded funereal to one

in his distress.

McFarlane entered the house. In an upper chamber he heard the step of him who alone remained — his son, inasmuch as his daughter had borne him — the grandchild — the only one — and one his eyes had never seen, and his old heart leaped with gladness.

And right here, insofar as concerns what followed, we stop. Such scenes as this it is not within the privileges of the stranger to look upon. For us its sacredness shall be inviolable. We will leave the trembling

hands of the old man clasped in those much younger but not much less infirm than his own. We will leave him to shed mingled tears of sorrow and joy over this meeting, so soon to be followed by one less transient one that shall last last through all eternity.

Sooner than he had dared hope — sooner than any who knew him would have surmised — his soul winged its way to that reunion he had so long desired, and of late sought. In a little while they carried him to rest

in a quiet spot overlooking the broad river.

And with the means placed at his command Roberts commenced definite action looking toward the finding of Helen.

VIII.

A NEW IDOL AT THE SHRINE OF LOVE.

Go lovely rose: Tell her that wastes her time and me, That now she knows, When I resemble her to thee, How sweet and fair she seems to be.

-WALLER.

TX/HEN Oakley left Helen he went to a mining town many miles distant, at which place he had received orders to install some mining machinery. At the "Company boarding house" he procured lodging. With many others he sat in the "loafing room" awaiting supper. A young woman, evidently employed at the house, came in to speak to one of the men. Oakley turned, surprised. Had he not left Helen convalescent at Sontag's, and unable to travel, he could have sworn the woman before him was she; the same wavy hair, dark eyes, and general contour of face made uncommon similitude.

"Do you know the name of that girl?" he asked of a companion.

"Sarah, I think," the latter replied.

"But her other name?"

"I think it's the same as her uncle's what keeps the house," was the unsatisfactory answer.

"What is his name then?"

"Furness."

"Oh," responded Oakley, turning again towards the girl standing in a distant corner. "I thought it was something else, he murmured, almost inaudibly. He

knew Helen by her married name only.

It was several days later before the girl came in again. Oakley was alone. The other men were nearly all at work or in the village. Bob was on night turn, and the day being rainy he sat reading in the room set apart for the men. He set his eyes on the girl, and looked so long and closely that both were embarrassed. He determined, however, to satisfy himself on the point, murmuring to himself:

"They surely must be related, anyway." He spoke

aloud:

"Miss Furness."

Oakley laid down a magazine; the young woman

ceased sweeping.

"Was you speaking to me?" she asked, knowing it full well, but using the only way she knew of entering with any apparent ease a conversation with a stranger.

The boarding-house girl of the mining country is rarely "bad," and diffidence is an obvious part of her make-up. If she's virtuous and desires to remain so, she does not come into intimate personal contact with the men she helps to serve. The author has been weeks at one place, and never once had opportunity of speaking to either of three young women of his age who aided in the care of twenty-six men. Not worse, nor better, than other men are these mine wanderers, but the elemental desires are ever strong pro rata with physical perfection and the exclusion of the feminine sex, and,

being so, conservative matrons uphold the reputations of their respective hostelries by placing the guard of seclusion about and around their "girls." Real Love there, as everywhere, has no difficulty in penetrating the "safeguard," as is attested by the marriages which enliven the village, and in which quite often one of the Wanderers ceases his traveling, and becomes a Benedict at rest. Poor Peterson was the only one I ever knew who never stood a chance of mooring his miner barque safely in the matrimonial harbor. But Peterson was an exception.

Oakley plunged straight into the subject nearest his

heart. "Have you got a sister named Helen?"

A look akin to shame crossed the girl's face. "Yes — we — Helen is my sister's name," she stammered.

"Do you know where she is?"

The young woman came closer and sat down at a respectable distance from the stranger. "No. We knew she was at Colville, at Number Four shaft—. but that was before mother and the family moved away, We haven't had any news of her since — George — her—since George was hurt," she faltered, not wishing to be positive regarding a matter of which she felt uncertain. It was plain the conversation pained her. She was glad to hear tidings of her sister, but she felt that the young man before her knew of her condition as well as location. The questions he asked, and the method of asking were not of the stranger.

"Do you know—" Oakley stopped. The young woman's face grew redder than the coals in the grate; she anticipated what he was about to say. "Do you know," he started again, "that your sister has a little

girl baby? and that she's married?"

"I know she was going to be confined, but I didn't know for sure she was married. I told Aunt all along I felt sure she was," the young woman murmured almost to herself, as if pleased of her own conviction relative to the sister's probity, which was, indeed, a matter worthy of pride. "She was goin' for a while with an orphan boy, who worked as clerk or something in Helen's factory, who used to laugh and tell us he might perhaps be real well off some day and his mother had sent him some to college, but couldn't finish it. Poor George!" she sighed, retrospectively, sweeping gingerly at the tiny dirt pile on the floor she had risen.

Oakley watched the smile play about her mouth as he conveyed the agreeable information, only to see a deep pallor surge upward into the vacuum made by receding blood, as he told of Robert's death in the hospital. For our Readers will understand that so

far as Oakley knew George Roberts was dead.

"Poor Helen and the baby!" Sarah exclaimed, "but if she is really married——" She again sat down. Oakley looked pained at her doubt. "Don't your folks know about these things?" he asked; "didn't you?"

"Indeed, Mr. Oakley, and how could we?" the girl replied, twirling nervously the broom laid at right angle across her knees with the quick, informal intimacy characteristic of her place and people — when the "bars" are lowered. "It seems impossible — no, not the baby," she smiled, in reply to an interrogation, "but that Helen and George were married. Sister was only just past seventeen, and George had wanted Helen, but our stepmother wouldn't give consent, and she said they couldn't get married without she did."

The young man, wiser in the world's ways from greater and more intimate contact, could not repress a smile. Without remarking the contortion at her expense — for Sarah was looking at the blue and white checks in her apron — she went on:

"Helen was gettin' three dollars a week at the cork

factory, and mother needed it."

"No doubt," soliloquized Oakley aloud, "but perhaps she didn't deserve it. Fifty cents aint much, as I remember when I got that in the shops, but some folks' affections aint worth more than thirty, and a discount for cash on that."

His face was impassive, and the girl had no rare sense of humor. She continued:

"They wrote and told me they thought Helen had come to Uncle's — that's here — but when I wrote and told 'em she wasn't here they thought maybe she was somewhere else."

Oakley smiled broadly, and breaking from the broom end, as it almost touched him lying across her lap, a splint, he proceeded to cast at the girl oblique interested glances, meanwhile poking between his teeth for something which wasn't there. But he knew — or rather his subconscious self did — that it was either in the pot or the oven waiting to torment. Necessity had brought the habit. He referred to her last sentence:

"You weren't sure?"

And the girl replied, stolid as earnest, "No."

Then Oakley forgot convention and just roared, and the girl blushingly awaited his occult laughter to subside before she added:

"Mother didn't care enough to find out."

The young man's face suddenly became serious. He forgot to pick up this last bit of unconscious humor, and was busy thinking of Motherhood as exemplified in his own.

"Your mother?" he questioned, his mind reverting to certain things gleaned from Helen, whom he had found truthful to the last detail in all things which called for fact only.

The girl allowed the sarcasm to pass.

"They thought she'd be goin' back home in a few

days."

"Which she would, too," Oakley interposed," if your — your — step-mother had been less devil and more human, or the green in your sister's pocket as long as the distance between that place where you moved from to here and Pittsburg."

"Oh," said Sarah, understanding some things which

had not before seemed clear.

Then Oakley, in that confidence of Congenial Youth, told her about Bennet and the soup, and how he had taken Helen to church, and the splendid love-making he had done at the finale, and after that some things

not so laughable.

In the sympathetic sister's eyes tears of laughter turned to sorrow, and in her intense feeling toward the youth who sat opposite her she could hardly refrain from hugging him. And yet with regard to what he had done to make Helen's way brighter and lighter he barely hinted, placing Mrs. Sontag always in the light of Guardian Angel, and himself as the Midnight Messenger. But even the perception too dull to see the plainest pun, sees and reciprocates a kindness.

Following this the blue eyes and the dark grew very nice to each other, and Oakley blushed as deep a rose color as Sarah, when the latter's aunt came in suddenly

and found the pair tete-a-tete.

Long and lovingly Sarah wrote to Helen that afternoon, telling in her simple, but earnest way of many things she knew her sister would want to hear. She dilated on her interview with Robert Oakley, and confessed, in the naive way some young women have of placing such confidences, that she was "already over head and ears in love with him." That this sentiment was reciprocated at least in part was evidenced later when Oakley took Sarah as his wife to the new assignment he had received.

But in fairness to him we must state that he had first offered the relation to Helen, for they had been in casual correspondence with each other.

Doubtless she had thought long and seriously, and

to his question if there was anyone else she replied:

"No, indeed, I should think, Mr. "Oakley, you would know that ". . . if I could only explain all "I feel . . but I'm not a very "good writer . . . but I can "say what I thought you would know "by now, that I like you, but the "child Tressy might. . . . "

be stated — or nothing.

"There's no one else," the letter continued, not much fear,

"and it would be best in the way you said, of course, but there's only the little girl and me, and where I go she'll go, too, if I have

"to work only for board Then later: "I know Sally will make you a good "woman. She was always a hard-working "girl, and steady, and I'm awful glad it's her . . I do hope you'll have good luck. "And what you said about my husband I "don't know hardly how to say it, but I do "know that nothing on this earth, and that's "why as much as Tressy, could change my love "for him. It don't seem to me "he's never going to see me and Tressy, and "I know perhaps I oughtn't to - now, but "I feel just the same towards him as I did "the day I last seen him . . . You can "tell Sally for me that if she has anything to "send the kids at home I'm going out to see "where he's buried, and take a wreath of "flowers I've growed in that little patch you "know by the kitchen window, if Mrs. Sontag "don't go away for awhile as she's thinking of. "She's talking of going to some place in Colo-"rado where her brother's a foreman at some "new coal mines out there, and if she does "fully make up her mind of course I'll have to "keep every cent for fear I couldn't get another "place where they'll let the baby go, and Mrs. "Sontag says it's not easy to do. She wants "me to go out West with her but I don't like "the idea of going that far away from him...

* * * * * * * *

"I'd like awful well to come out for the wed-"ding but I can't just now."

And with a few other commonplaces the young mother's epistle ended. For the beautiful mining country girl of nineteen the love of the youth of twenty-one whose name she bore, and who was her child's father, was with each dawn renewed - and hope. Theirs no glittering bubble of passion to be pricked at the first untoward movement, but sacred and lasting as life itself. And Oakley was not the only one who had tried and found Helen the living symbol of constancy to a cherished love. More than one of our most superb specimens of young manhood had laid the utmost of their gentleness at her disposal, and she, sensing you or I perhaps would not the true spirit of kindness, accepted their attentions. But when in either case it grew to a bolder, more demonstrative point, each in turn was kindly, but firmly told that her heart was unchangingly another's.

Before this great sorrow she had grown rather than shrunk, the flower of her womanhood in its shadow bloomed. Before full of girl's moods and vagaries at times, now she was in every essential a woman with a real woman's depth of thought and solidity of action and decision. Uncommonly well she "knew her own mind," and adhered to it. If any one could have changed her purpose, or alienated her affections, Oakley most assuredly could. For she had never ceased to have a tender feeling almost akin to love for

him. And though not said, undoubtedly it in part was the magnanimity of a sister which allowed Sarah to become his wife, and she being altogether of a pliant disposition took for husband him who loved the other sister better, with a full knowledge of every act and word which had passed between the pair in that respect. Moreover, Robert Oakley's interest in Helen did not cease with his marriage. Letters and small remittances went infrequently in the after time to the Sontag boarding house, and when that kindly woman and her husband went to a Western mining country Helen availed herself of the oft-repeated invitation to share the Oakley home.

She went one morning, when the early frost had whitened the ground, to the station, and several hours later was ushered into a room in which lay her sister and her first baby: a robust boy. From that day until errors omissive on the part of mining officials and owners, and errors commissive on the part of an ignorant employee, removed Oakley and nearly two hundred others from their earthly labors, Helen and little Tressy abode with them. Regarding this we must speak later.

A LITTLE BROOCH.

Oh! was it I or was it you That broke the subtle chain that ran Between us two, between us two? Oh, was it I or was it you?

- PERRY.

SOMEWHERE, while for the few fleeting months he had by superhuman exertions of a dear mother been a collegian, George Roberts had read that every year in the United States alone several thousand men, women and children disappear literally "from the face of the earth," and, despite every exertion on the part of loving friends, despite published notices far and wide, despite the money rewards offered for even positive proof of their death, or whereabouts if alive, ninety per cent are never again heard of! Truly fiction pales before actuality. The author's imagination is a mole-hill of tragedy compared with what is happening around us every day. But seeing it personally, or as it is dished out to us in the monosyllabic press dispatch, we fail to analyze even its remotest fringe. us, then, it is "statistics." Let it come into our life and it loses its generic pallor and electrifies us with the vari-hued and many-sided human, tragic emotion. In order to explain the writer must, even with one or two cases, dissect, and the dissection and reiteration

become to the casual and shallow critic Improbability.

But this aside, when George Roberts had tried for almost half as many years as his grandfather, to unravel one of these thousands of human mysteries, the suspense had grown almost chronic, and — bearable. He had no idea of giving up: he came from the wrong stock to do that, and it was this inherent determination, which even in so hopeless a case as this had proved, which prompted him to undertake himself what he had before delegated to others, believing they were cleverer

than he in their own specific sphere.

His peace of mind had been solely disturbed relative to Helen, however. Extreme kindness and equity had characterized his new position in the World of Toil. The foundry employees found in him a good, even personal friend, and to those who through no fault of their own were suffering as he had done no man may compute his kindness. He delved deep into the sorsows of their lives, partly from a selfish motive, for thereby lay a lessening of his own. Have you not felt likewise, reader, when, in the midst of sorrow you thought greater than you could bear, you heard of a neighbor having affliction compared with which your own was trivial? His changed status also brought him in contact with a "higher," or, at least, a better educated class, whose opportunities had been broader.

One of these was a young man of exceptional qualities, whose traits were to those of Roberts as brother's. He had found the roll foundry irksome, and had gone into the publishing business. His weekly magazine is a regular visitant in many homes — perhaps yours. Roberts had spent a Sabbath evening with him and his

wife, and told them of his intention, and he consented to give the young editor a "story" whenever he could: stories of The Underground. "Simply as a relaxation," he told them, "from the heart-breaking work before me. If I don't, Mrs. Elliot," he told the young wife, "I shall go mad — stark staring mad! And writing of theirs makes mine less."

"I believe you," she replied, referring to the possibility of insanity, more truthfully expressing what she saw in the whitening hair and, haggard, wild eyes of the man not older than her husband in years, than

tactfully hiding it. Roberts modified:

"If I write of the misery of others, and only cause alleviation in the least, I shall feel happier. My plan is to visit *every* coal mining town, village, or hamlet in the United States. Helen's folks were all mining people, you know?"

The woman expressed languid surprise, and, if Roberts felt anything approaching lethargy he must

have covered it deep with earnestness.

"I shall visit homes made desolate by The Dread Invisible and the slate falls, and find out, if possible, what our much vaunted humanity does for those widows and orphans. Do you know, Mrs. Elliot, our civilization seems top heavy on the wrong side? . . "

The woman smiled, but looked puzzled. Roberts

explained: this sudden twist in his subject.

"We make it almost *criminal* for any Soldier of Industry to get permanently wounded or killed at the Industrial Battle front, where heroism, self-sacrifice and forbearance are so common as to receive Indifference for medals."

Mrs. Elliot fanned gently, and suggested very half-heartedly that "perhaps you are right, Mr. Roberts; but," she added, "why criminal?"

Roberts' eyes snapped.

"Do we not compel the widow of the erstwhile lawabiding, hard-working miner, mechanic, or other wage-earner, mental or physical, to share common lot with the wife of the burglar and the murderer? Do we not place on our Public Beneficence such Publicity and utter SHAME that a self-respecting man or woman would rather die of slow starvation than endure it?—in fact do die the slow, awful death of semi-starvation? Oh!" he hastened, a surging irony plainly evident to Mrs. Elliot, "the train of ills induced makes lots of choice for the burial certificate."

Mrs. Elliot shuffled uneasily. These were topics

elemental in Roberts, in a sense repugnant to her.

"I had never known that," she replied. "We surely pay sufficient tax that all our deserving poor should be well looked after. I heard Frank saying the other night

that his tax was ---"

"Pardon me," Roberts interposed, "you mistake me . . . we pay enough — we are not inhuman enough to deny it when we know the purpose for which it is intended. We fight every tax but The Poor Tax, but I've the first sensible man to meet yet who fought against his share of that. . . . Our sin is of omission rather than commission. We pay our dues in this National Benevolent Fraternity: The Ancient Order of Adams and Eves:" — Mrs. Elliot smiled behind her fan — "and contentedly remain at home and read how many thousands were disbursed. We

know little, and care less, of how, and to whom! Let me tell you, Mrs. Elliot, what you perhaps know by personal contact, the stigma we unconsciously place on our public charity defeats our purpose: those who deserve it, and whom we would like to have it will not accept it under such conditions. Let any intelligent invalid father and mother reduced to this extremity tell us all they know and I'm thinking our National Fraternity would set about formulating a new set of rules.

"But that is aside. I mentioned it only because of late so many helpless victims of employees' ignorance and disobedience, and employers' greed, have been thrown on the world's mercy, and I have heard it is not very susceptible to influence. You may tell Frank it is my intention to see as many of these as happen in my circle of observation, since I believe the Mine-widow — I had almost said 'Wife,'" he added with a grim smile — "comes nearest by her multiplicity to the heart of a contemporary Sorrower like me."

"Frank and you are so much alike in these matters, Mr. Roberts," the woman responded with a stifled

yawn.

Roberts rose and stepped across the room to an onyx table on which his hat rested, and turned to grasp Mrs. Elliot's hand at parting.

"You must get married - and - forget," she dim-

pled, "there's Evelyn ---"

Roberts shook his head. "You don't know but Helen and I will yet pay you a visit together," he said more hopefully, and went out. In his circling Roberts had reached Pittsburg again, when men, gathered in groups spoke more or less sympathetically of an explosion at a mine not many miles away.

"Nearly two hundred men and boys lost . . .

one only alive . . . he's blinded."

"The same old story" came from another. "Gee! I'd hate to be a miner."

Said another: "It's harder on the women and kids."

Roberts purchased an evening paper, and, seated comfortably in his hotel lobby, perused, in common with a dozen others at the same moment, those details which to say the least are horrifying. Beside them the told imagination of a Poe were music; each beat of their grim tattoo a human soul sent hurriedly to meet its God; a home in nearly every case deprived of its breadwinner. Sufficient, therefore, is our reason for omitting detail. Fain are we to hurry our reader to scenes more pleasant, albeit, in our note ushering this tale before you,* we promised only "life as it really is." We confess non-fulfillment of our purpose. Shadows darker than the shades of Hell would overwhelm these pages were they truly descriptive of mining life as it really is to-day in the gas-coal regions of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, that of it which comprises the widows and orphans.

This leads the author to ask you, since this question is indirectly of your solving, not less than the men directly in touch with the mines, when will you coerce miner and employer? From childhood a miner, such his father and brothers, from grease boy to superintendent, the author adduces as basis of his *First edition.

assertion that it lies with The Public to stop, in a great measure, this wholesale slaughter. The majority of employers are indifferent, the men themselves too

calloused. But think you of the children!!

Also this knowledge of actual mine life places us in substantial position to explain Robert Oakley's death. For Oakley - no doubt on errand which took him quite frequently from mine to mine — was one of nearly two hundred sent into eternity through the explosion we have already referred to. It was proven later that Oakley had not been in the fated mine at the time of the holocaust of flame. Amid the confusion following he had slipped into the descending cage, unnoticed, with an overwhelming desire to save any who might have been left alive. His lamp beside him, they found him sitting by the roadside, the subtle "afterdamp" having caught him not many hundred yards from the "bottom." Painlessly, his head sunk on his breast, he had suddenly found himself unable to go either inward or outward, and had sat down to recuperate the fast-going strength. For it is improbable that Oakley knew the subtle gas. or rather a mixture of gases, which wafted into eternity his noble soul, or it is but reasonable to presume he would not have gone into it so far. Gladly would we omit mention of these facts, but they have so much bearing on what follows that, much as we desire, we may not. In our hurried passing we must get one sad This done we shall leave for the columns of the daily press the unenviable necessity of recounting these incidents, and, to some future "Lincoln," the inflexible determination to rouse Public Opinion to the horrors of this Underground Slavery with Death as

Master; to a future "Washington" the leadership of a host which shall free Mine Foremen and State Mine Inspectors from combined tyranny, allowing them to carry out to successful operation laws which these two classes of men would have obeyed if they could, to the end that little children such as yours and mine may not cry so often for the father who never comes. These men would make mining as safe as mortal men may make it; will, indeed, do so, when in some future day the three barriers, now insurmountable, shall be removed: Public Indifference, which reaches even into the Courts of Law; the greed of employer, and the destructive disobedience of the employee.

Roberts, with a score of "professionals," had been for two days at the scene of calamity, quietly aiding here and there wherever a dollar or a kind word would do good. In a little school house the authorities prepared for last journeys men who had resided but a short time in the village previous to the accident. Some of them as we have said, had not been in the mine even long enough to have their names recorded on the company's books, hence, except in a few instances, they

were laid to rest among the "unknown."

But none was laid away, however, without the only effort possible being made to preserve such marks of identification as might be on him. These consisted of some things, which, despite the seriousness of the matter, almost brought laughter from the onlookers. But in an instant from another — perhaps a father — would be taken some little emblem of love that brought from the most calloused a sympathetic sigh and a silent tear. The reporters — Roberts among them — moved along

the aisle, jotting down thought as it occurred to them anent these last trival tokens of mortality—extinguished love, the tangible evidences of that subtle thing we call "life" ever having been in that black lump of charred flesh. But who shall truthfully say what thing is trivial The pinprick may overthrow a dynasty and an empire, or change a world at peace to a world at war.

In turn they came to one of the very few whose features remained almost as in life. The eyes were even closed, as in sleep, and the tongue which to someone had perhaps but yesterday uttered words of love and tenderness, lay naturally — an uncommon thing.

"In life he must have been a splendid specimen of manhood," said Roberts, to the man whose duty it was to take inventory of such as may be in or on the

clothing.

"He sure was a fine chap," the other responded, almost sympathetically pitying the sudden extinction of such useful, perfect, wage-earning life. "Some-

body'll miss him sure."

Uncommonly careful, the undertaker laid aside each piece of material, among them a letter, another meanwhile making annotation underneath a number given each body. The reporters gathered nearby made special remarks of this case for their respective papers, mentioning the man's name as "Bob," with which term the letter without envelope was started. He had evidently thrown the cover away. The news-gatherers seemed to scent therein a column story or perhaps two.

Roberts very seriously watched the scene, and, as each article was deposited in the specific group took it

into his own hands.

First there came a combination tool — well worn — such as mechanics and men having to do with machinery affect — and other things all pointing to the same conclusion with regard to the man's occupation — then a tiny memo, which held only record — a considerable period back — of work done, but not at that mine. Then, from the inside pockets of the coat a letter without envelope, which we have already referred to, evidently written in a woman's hand, and a little brooch, old fashioned, but solid gold, well worn, and in the form of two hearts entwined, and some inscription thereon, similar to a monogram. Also a few dimes.

Roberts took the brooch in his hand, and for the first time evinced interest. Some of the others snickered slightly, and he scowled at them. One suggested a "sweetheart," and Roberts told him he'd never make a detective: "The pattern is out of date twenty years."

Then to the official:

"Can I take these things where there is more light?"
The man nodded. Roberts wore glasses, and had poor eyesight at best.

When he reached a lamp, Roberts stood under its broad green shade, and held the shawl pin in its rays,

and his hand shook and his knees trembled.

"If this isn't my mother's brooch the one coincidence in ten million is before me, and Fate," he muttered hoarsely, "has of all men chosen me for her particular sport. . . . If it is the thing I think it is, and there is any address in the letter from that poor fellow's pocket, my search is practically ended."

He put the pin carefully in his pocket and held up the letter. Evidently the man had torn off part of the address corner when opening it, one corner having the starting point inscribed being burnt. Of the address three letters alone remained: Was ——. The man was unaccounted for on the roll of the Company's employees which fact coincided with the letter.

Roberts turned its pages and came to the signature. It was simply a woman's given name, and mentioned two children named "Bobbie" and "Tressy" but the fact that the signature on a postscript was "Helen," despite the introduction of two unknown children, sent the blood receding from Roberts' face. He staggered pale, trembling, to the group at the dead tables. The three links had started a chain too obviously suggestive of solution to be ignored.

"Don't take that body to the trench," he commanded, and the men looked at him, questioning momentarily

his seriousness.

"Do you mean that?" the undertaker queried.

"I mean it," returned Roberts, emphatically. "Send it to Riverview Cemetery: have it placed in a vault to await further instructions."

"Can't do it, Mister," came gruffly, "much as I'd like to 'commodate you"; and Roberts, forgetting that

the man didn't know him, just stared blankly.

"We're only allowed thirty dollars for each 'stiff'," came brutally in addition, and the man went on indifferently with his gruesome task. "The Company only allows the same amount for all."

Roberts touched one of the newspaper men on the shoulder. "I saw you with a pen, Scotten," he suggested, "will you please let me have it a moment?"

With his attention drawn to a group entering with

more bodies at the door, the reporter mechanically handed the fountain pen to Roberts, with a casual

glance and remark that he looked white.

"Then I belie my feelings," came the answer, with a poor attempt at cheerfulness and a smile: "I feel blue, my boy; of a decided ultramarine color is my soul, just now," he added, laying his hand on the other's shoulder.

Scotten grinned and went to see if the "latest were anything uncommon." Roberts sat down and placed a check-book on his knee. A minute later he handed a detached slip from it to the undertaker, and received a look of doubt as to the worth of the paper. He glanced at one of the men who knew Roberts personally and, receiving a nod of assurance, said that the amount stated would be amply sufficient for the purpose.

"If anyone with a better claim to him and this letter and things turns up," Roberts admonished, "just send

them up to North Braddock."

He gave the number of his residence, and turned to go, then stopped a moment to shake hands with his companions of the pencil and pad. He had in a great degree recovered his composure; his face beamed

hopefully.

"I'm going to do a little detective work, boys," he told them, almost boyish in his frame of mind. He pointed to the unmarred body. "I'm going to find, with the help of God," his voice sank suddenly, and remembering his former failures, he corrected: "I'm going to try to find the home of that man; the woman and the children he left. . . ." He started a step forward, and they looked after him with the

longing of comrades, and he waved his hand from the

doorway: "Good by, fellows: good by."

Scotten waved an answer, and one of the others called: "Good by, old chap, and good luck!" their minds all too engrossed to hunt deep for motives. They thought Roberts a little luny any how.

* * * * * * * *

While the two things: the brooch and the postscript signed "Helen": seemed to offer a solution to Roberts, when he looked closely he had the choice of being absolutely baffled again at the very start, or placing himself in the Enoch Arden class. He tried hard to cast this last thought aside but it would stick in spite of his self-assurance, and bobbed up serenely clear at many

points.

The letter was started "Dear Bob," and signed "From Your Affectionate Wife." Then the writer had grown clearer of handwork, and used ink in preference to pencil, also signed herself as "Helen." Neither did the postscript bear direct co-relation to the page preceding. "But the brooch!" Roberts urged to himself; and Conservatism prompted: "And two children." "But," Roberts insisted: "My Helen was that way when ——" And again Conservatism: "That probably only accounts for one; either illicit love or marriage could account for the other, and nothing else."

Roberts thought a moment, reasoning: "The handwriting wasn't as clear, though very similar in the first part and the last, and may have been written by someone else." To which was offered: "One half of your writing does not always look like the rest; cap-

ricious, tired, you change the style, or tool."

"But the brooch, and Helen!" Roberts flung at himself, "and I'll be more satisfied anyway for it—it might have been twins!" He almost felt happy at the very idea. So he started, the burning desire he had before felt smothered to an appreciable extent.

Fast as the fast-flying monsters of the rail could take him he journeyed from one to the other of many towns and villages having as part of their name the syllable found on the letter, after he had made an exhaustive search in each. Still following this clue, and then that, — all vague threads in a tangled skein of circumstances — we leave him, full of unparalleled perseverance in spite of repeated failures.

"PEDDLE OR STARVE."

Adversity is not without comforts and hopes Virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant when they are . . crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.

— Francis Bacon.

The stars come nightly to the sky,

The dews fall on the lea;

Nor time, nor space, nor deep nor high

Can keep my own away from me.

-Anon.

IN a small house on the outskirts of a mining town in Indiana a little girl and a small boy sat watching their mother and aunt respectively embroider chair cushions. What had been at one time of her life a pleasant pastime was become wholly a necessity, even as at long intervals the precarious trade of mine machine runner had brought the work to the family's aid temporarily.

She was doing it for bread for the little folks at her knee, and so did another sister when not on other errands. For neither women was this phase of life new;

both had labored for bread before.

Out along a path running into a larger road, and losing itself among the distant buildings, came a woman.

Through the open door the boy was first to see her, and rising, ran shouting gleefully to meet her. Following him the woman who had been sewing came to the door.

"Any news?" she asked, as the other came near the building, an imploring look on her face.

"Nothing again," came the reply, with a trembling

voice and a twitching lip.

Both women went into the house. The woman who held the embroidery sat in the chair she had vacated, but she did not sew. Like one in a dream she held the needle poised. It was plain she had long been expectantly hoping for one of these trips to town to result in something very vital. She seemed suddenly to have lost all interest in her work. Laying it aside she walked over to a window, silently, and for a long minute looked out wistfully into the east. Yet the other, really, one would have expected to see more downcast. She it was to whom this matter of "no mail this morning" was particularly pertinent, since he who both women expected news of was to the woman at the window only a sister's husband, the other held the place of wife. She, however, was one of those beings who are favored or otherwise - according to the point of view - who seem neither capable of great elation nor depression; who cannot suffer so intensely as another, neither can they know exquisite joy over anything whatsoever.

At length the woman at the window resumed her seat. "You must write to-morrow to the firm, and find out

where he is — if they know," she said.

Fortunate for those two women they didn't purchase the daily papers, hence were spared much additional suspense which would have most certainly entered into their minds therefrom. Also were they some distance removed from any house, nor frequented they with neighbor women since they toiled almost incessantly of late, and when he had been there they had no need of neighboring; his company was all sufficient, and they

had not been there so very long.

For a few minutes the sisters talked quietly before resuming their sewing. The two children were already at play, after being chided by the mothers for childish boisterousness. The exuberance of untroubled childhood seems to be utterly past comprehension at such a time, veritable mockery of Fate's cruel thrust, as indeed it is. Joyousness is Growth, Sorrow is Death, and Youth is synonym for all Life, and its mood not infrequently at war with its contrast. Forbear, Nervous Mother, forbear!

Each day was but a repetition of the day preceding, until as the days wore into weeks, in only that way they do when you feel positive the next day will bring what you are looking for, and failing, surely the next, the sisters were fain to cry as another had done before them: "I have known some happy hours, but all now seems to lead to sorrow, and not only the cups of wine, but of milk, seem drugged with poison for me! I do not court these things, they come!" Afar, another soul was lifting up its voice in a similar cry, unable to see or understand the mysterious Providence working thus harshly to bring joy out of sorrow — from grief and separation an enduring reunion destined to remain unbroken this side of the grave. They could not see the angles of destiny coming to a point the manner of

which was known only to the all-wise Ruler of the universe and our humble lives. But it is well. The gold — undefiled — comes only by way of the furnace. The true serenity of life, as of the elements, is the child

of the seething storm.

"To-morrow one of us must go and peddle again, the same as when Bob was off work so long," suggested the elder sister. "It's either peddle or starve, for the last cent of Bob's last pay is gone," she added grimly. "The only thing I hate is the children who call so after you.

"Yes," replied Sarah; "but if they do it's honest, and all right, and that's a lot . . . even if we

don't get willing help in makin' sales."

"It seems to me," Helen continued as she stitched regularly, "that the world hasn't much time for anyone who is spunky and independent of spirit — if they're poor or sick. They seem to think that a change in their income should mean a change in their disposi-

tion. . . That's the way I've found it"

"Well," responded the other, "they'll tell you beggars shouldn't be choosers . . . and they seem to class everybody that has to sell anything in the beggar class . . . that is if you can't start up in a big way - a store or something. . . But what do we need to care," she rippled real hopefully. "We'll surely hear from Bob soon, and then some other poor devil can have my job."

Helen looked at her with a bare trace of laughter.

"Why, Sally!" she drawled.

"It's a fact," Sally responded, though it wasn't, then: "And you write to-morrow, and I'll go out and see what I can do."

The next day Sarah started with a sample and an order book, and Helen did the writing as they had planned. She made inquiries of two firms: one for whom Robert Oakley worked, and one in whose mine he had been delegated to demonstrate the efficiency of their specific mining machine. The latter stated that he had been there one day, but, finding the machine had been delayed, had gone to a mining town farther north, "since we, as yet, have no boarding accommodations for even our own men. Perhaps," the letter continued, hiding in indirect sentence what the kindly soul - whoever he may be who wrote it probably thought otherwise, "perhaps your husband saw a favorable opportunity for temporary employment, and is working at one of the mines somewhere near. We trust you will hear from him before we get an opportunity to advise you further."

Whoever wrote the letter to Mrs. Oakley knew how to ward off pain. Also had he gleaned from the woman's communication that she was ignorant as regarded the explosion. He made no mention of this. From the firm who employed Oakley came the following:

"We haven't received a report from your husband, Mr. Robert Oakley, since the 14th ult. Our shipment may have had something to do with this, as it has been delayed in reaching its destination. As soon as we receive the first report from Mr. Oakley it will give us pleasure to advise you of his whereabouts, if (which is very improbable) you do not hear from him first."

And the Reader will bear in mind that neither of these two writers knew that Robert Oakley was even in the near vicinity of the ill-fated mine. For either to have conveyed to the women a hint tha he was perhaps a victim of the catastrophe would have been not only an assumption in a case demanding nothing but fact, but would bave been inhumanly cruel — and our business men generally, coal operators to the union not-withstanding, are essentially kind. Much they must do often hurts them equally as the victim of the business blow.

These letters, rather than creating alarm, added to the belief that the husband and wage earner for the family held aloof from writing pending more favorable news.

The women, with patience our mothers only can exhibit, decided to wait. In fact they could do nothing else. From day to day they lived with the utmost economy, eating the least, and the poorest food a human being may take into his stomach and live. Their nearest neighbor even didn't have an inkling as to their semi-starvation, so desperately determined were they to remain without the stigma of asking Public Relief; hoping that each day would bring the long-expected money order from Oakley. Never before had he been half as long without sending a letter, although he had the average workman's antipathy to ink.

Helen went on sewing and embroidering; Sarah, less sensitive to insult, doing all the selling when she wasn't receiving contempt and rebuff. This phase of public selling away and of coöperative endeavor at home brought in a little while to that household more bitter experience than they would have received in a lifetime otherwise. For if there be hid behind the Mask of Kindness the soul-destroying, sensuous Man

Lust, start your wife — (if she be fairly provided with Womanly beauty) — out to find it. Spots in the Garden of Life well-favored by the gods, well looked upon by men, will suddenly spout the poisonous Flower of Desire, and, after the manner of their Fertilizer whisky and the Devil: will call the prompting by another name.

Sarah had come in contact with a few of the species, and was quite wary of them all, as well befitted her occu-

pation and helpless condition.

Also this frame of mind extended to a man who accosted her kindly one day: a man unusually careworn, yet obviously well-to-do. Despite the reprobates men generally were kinder than the women! Now, my fair Reader, don't take offence. There may be — in fact there is — a physiological reason for this paradox. I say men were kinder than women — to Sarah. Women would have been more sympathetic to her husband, no doubt, had he been in Sarah's place and pursuing her purpose with them.

And Mrs. Oakley had learned to distinguish with almost unfailing accuracy between the man that bought of her because he was drawn to her by her clean and tidy appearance and obvious desire to be self-supporting, and really desired to give her a helping hand, and the other kind. She almost immediately placed the Stranger in Class A. He was importunate to an embarrassing degree, but he did not buy. He was, however, uncommonly kind; offering to carry her bundle

until the last one should be distributed.

"He says something about a city paper for which he is writing a —— something —— about the miners,"

said Sarah that evening. "He would have kept me talking a long time, but I had to go and leave him."

"It's strange the papers can't leave poor people alone," replied the elder sister, busily engaged preparing the evening meal. Then, "Has he gone away?"

"No; he said he would stay until we could tell him about ourselves, as we were 'exceptionally good sub-

jects for a sketch."

"Sarah," said Helen, somewhat sternly, "the man is impudent. I hope you didn't give him any encouragement."

Sarah looked abashed.

"I did; it was the only answer he would take."

Helen placed the knives and forks beneath the plates setting, simple as was the meal, on a swan-white tablecloth.

"But Robert isn't exactly a miner; nor are we," she returned, the shadow of a smile crossing her face.

Sarah explained: "It is — er — the mining people's women folks I should have said," her face crimsoning with self-accusation for the privilege given the man, and for which action her sister's attitude had made her ashamed.

"I'm very sorry," continued the latter, "but we can't do anything else than let him come — now — although I don't see that we can tell him much.

Sarah explained, drawing her chair meanwhile to the supper Helen had just placed on the clean linen: "It ain't the way the men do underground he wants to find out, but about how the women and children is cared for, as so many is left by accidents."

Helen's face paled suddenly. Her hand, partly

lifted to her mouth, fell almost helpless to the table. Her sister's words had brought to mind an accident which had, indeed, made her only too well qualified to speak on the subject. Also, to her, being more sensitive and discerning, the incident as Sarah had just now expressed it, had suddenly loomed with portentious possibilities. But regarding her surmisings she remained silent, although hope had died slowly as day after day passed after the Firm's replies.

The family invoked a blessing on the food before them. Bobbie, who had been busy at play, yet, by that indefinable method we know but cannot undersand, had heard all the grown-ups were speaking of,

asked if that man were his papa.

His mother turned and was silent. Helen answered. "No, Bobbie, but Papa will maybe come home to-

morrow or the next day."

The woman sighed, and, elbow crooked and set on the table, and her cheek resting in the open palm, she ceased eating, and thought and thought. Her appeasing words to the little boy were a lie to her heart. In truth both women felt the same, but one less poignantly, in each an intuition which she vainly tried to hide from the other, that somewhere their Breadwinner was at rest. In each womanly heart suspense had placed an irremovable image of a new-made grave, but a sister's love constantly made the lips belie it. Sarah broke the silence following little Bobbie's reference to his Papa. Said she with a trace of a smile:

"The man said his was a muck-raking paper — whatever that is — and that they sometimes paid well for their information. What did he mean by that,

Helen?"

Helen considered a moment, pouring a weak solu-

tion she called "coffee" into her sister's cup.

"I don't know," she said at length, "unless it is that whenever anyone hunts up and writes down a lot of truth and facts that have been partly buried, it generally creates a 'stink,' as they call it. And those who get most of the nasty smell naturally object. . . It's always been the same, I guess. . . Somebody always objects to have their nice grass mounds prodded for fear the hole whould let the stink out."

"I've noticed that at Uncle's," Sarah responded, taking Helen literally, "with that old stable of his. It had one or two old hills, and they used to get covered with the nicest green grass — it seemed a pity to scatter

it all over the garden."

Helen looked past her sister, smiling at her quaint obtuseness, which besides being the very antithesis of Helen's mind, was become almost unnoticed owing to its frequency. Bobbie and the little girl asked for more pieces, and she stopped while she cut them. She laid the knife aside and sat down.

"Dirty places have a way of making long green stuff grow," she murmured almost to herself. Then, louder: "You didn't say we'd take pay?"

"No," Sarah replied. "I didn't know who or what

he was."

"That's right ——" the piercing black eyes snapped coaxingly as to a child: "Don't you ever do it from no man, unless — unless he buys a cushion — you never can tell what's behind a man's dollar when it's given to a dependent woman." Lower, and almost in prayer, the earnest mother, Protectress of Virtue —

for this little group the Head even as Sarah was the Body — uttered:

"Oh, God! send Robert home!"

Helen was not fearsome for herself, but she was for the unintention of the other.

Sarah had not heard the invocation. She resumed

her topic.

"I told him that we'd only had to do this a few times when Bob was off work so long, and now, but he said even a little would help, perhaps to do some other poor soul a good turn. He said his aim was to get better treatment for them as was unfortunate and tried hard to help themselves, like us when we get in a pinch, and worse for the degraded sots who would neither 'weave nor spin,' yet was strong and able."

Despite Sarah's dullness she had a keen sense of pride in her and her Sister's effort, inculcated most of

it from the master-mind.

Helen folded the tablecloth and shook it at the door,

then, returning, sat down and took up her work.

"He said that in some places there was practically no difference made now between 'em, and that by printin' folks' actual experiences he hoped to make it better for them who deserved better."

"Well," replied Helen, "the man mayn't be worthy, but his purpose surely is, as we can truthfully say, and

anything you can tell him you ought to."

"Me?" exclaimed Sarah.

"Of course. How could I, when I've never been out of the lot since we moved here. And — and — "she said frankly — "I don't believe I'd care to, no matter what his cause."

"That's so," Sarah acquiesced, satisfied in Helen's decisions not alone as regarded Helen, but nearly always awaited and abided in them for herself also.

And the matter was dropped, awaiting the stranger's advent on the morrow; also the long-looked-for letter which would surely come. And it did, Impatient Reader.

Special Note by the Author.

For the remaining portion of this story I am indebted to the courtesy of George Roberts, Esq., at the present time one of those men who by activity, precept and example, are doing much to make this world a better place to live in. The greater part of what follows had been written with original intention of incorporating it with the other incidents preceding in the series he was writing, and which we have mentioned hitherto. But, through later events involving Mr. Roberts and others — and which were unseen at the time — he decided not to publish it. And, indeed, so have we, excepting only such portions as have direct bearing on our own story of Mr. Roberts' life during these years. Moreover, the incidents, sad, pleasing and romantic as they may seem to the Reader, were gained for your perusal, and a fitting end to this story, only after our promise to sink the real identity of these people behind fictitious names. This we have done; and the manuscript never having appeared in print - although rightfully belonging to the matter previously submitted to the weekly paper we shall not therefore be accounted guilty of violating friendly confidence, nor of plagiarism.

And right here it is perhaps most fitting that public thanks be given to the gentleman we have called "Roberts," for his ministrations in behalf of this work. We believe the intelligent Reader will heartily concur with us in our opinion that nothing we could possibly have written or imagined would have given the perfect "finish" to his tale which we pride ourselves as having wrought by adhering strictly to Mr. Roberts' manuscript. Thus have we, in humble way, added another link (if, indeed, one be needed, which we doubt) in the chain of evidence that truth is at all times stranger than fiction. We regret only that easily seven-eighths of Mr. Roberts' manuscript is of necessity omitted. Decidedly interesting in itself, being almost solely ethical, it is not pertinent to the subject on which our story treats; hence, greatly against our desire, we have omitted all except such as bears directly on our own characters. We commence near the end of the gentleman's writings as submitted to our care, making no apology for an absolute necessity which Mr. Roberts, equally with myself, will understand.

BENEATH A WILLOW TREE.

By "GEORGE ROBERTS."

"An unknown man, respectably dressed,"
That was all that the record said.
When will the question let us rest,
Is it fault of ours that the man was dead?"

— (H. H.)

SINCE perusing the foregoing part of this work, as written by Mr. Reynolds, I deem it unnecessary to recite the incidents leading to my wandering so far out as Indiana, to the town of W ———. I had visited and made inquiries in every town, village, and hamlet in the coal-mining countries, which had as part of their names the syllable found on the dead miner's letter. And, although there yet remained a slight possibility that one of such places as had a compound name — as instance: Washington Heights — might yet reward my persistence, yet in truth I must confess that I started on this second round with little hope of carrying out my plan as outlined in the Pennsylvania village school house — turned temporarily into a morgue.

But perhaps you have remarked the subtlety of — of Luck (we may as well call it that as anything else, since no name defines it satisfactorily) concerning a search for any particular object where there are a number of others identical?

You haven't! Well try it sometime.

Nine times out of the ten the particular apple in the barrel or the marble in the bag will turn up last! I have particularly remarked this in a set of books I have identical as to size and color, yet I have never once been fortunate in finding the particular volume without searching them all, since the number in this case gives no index of the matter desired.

And here, in a crisis affecting the destiny of a number of people, was the same "thing" taking place, much to my humility. From each place I returned to my home just long enough to give Elliot such material as I had cared to indite, and see that affairs at my foundry were running smoothly. The writing I had learned to like very much, and it passed many a weary hour away, and made my burdened search for health and Helen lighter. Also it gave me a better grasp on the infinitesimal insignificance of any one human being in this great country of ours. For, dear Reader, lest you grow over proud, allow me to say:

In the "pond" where you live you may (if you will pardon the term) be quite a big "frog," and cause considerable commotion when you move about; but get into the vast sea of humanity, my friend, if you really want to get your correct measure. My experiences in this line would fill several volumes, and doubtless make interesting reading all, even as a tithe put to paper helped fill Elliot's Weekly during several years. I also expected to continue the work along that line for a great many more years, but verily we know not what a day

will bring forth. Destiny - in that those suddenly thrust, and lovingly, into my care should have their utmost interests conserved - compelled cessation before midnight of that day, and all my attention directed henceforth to my foundry, which isn't overly large.

But that is running ahead of my story, which brings us to the town mentioned on a fearfully hot morning in August, and to a young woman whom ill fortune had compelled to battle for her own and her child's bread. To many she was simply "only a peddler": to me a heroine.

The noon whistles had quite a long time past been sounded, which without doubt explains the weariness obvious in her face. At least I had rather attribute it to that than unkindness.

From her appearance the woman had travelled over a considerable portion of the town before entering a public square to rest on one of its benches, where with a sigh she laid down the articles she carried. I spoke to her, and, startled, surprised, at this over-confidence of a stranger (insofar as concerned his ability to engage her in conversation) she at first answered my questions only in monosyllables.

The woman was fair to look upon. Despite apparent hardship her cheek had lost none of the bloom synonymous with the flower of womanhood. A round chin, tiny, dimpled, sat prettily beneath a mouth as finely curved as any ever delighting the eye of an artist.

On her finger I noted a wedding ring.

She rose to resume her journeying. Respectfully I offered my aid for the rest of the day, and just as respectfully it was declined. But before losing sight of her I exacted a promise to see me on the morrow.

To obtain the promised interview — to receive from direct source the facts I had made it my mission to procure — I climbed the hills marking the sub-division from the town proper, then along a level stretch of road to the cottage — the home of the "peddler woman" and her sister.

There, beneath a wide-spreading willow, I gleaned additional facts for my story, which in this case, as in all others, varies only as vary circumstance and location.

(Here again we have of necessity left out many pages of the Roberts manuscript.)

W. H. R.

In those indefinite pauses when a rapid shorthand learned at college placed my writing faster than the woman's verbal story I remarked with much interest a similitude of the woman before me to one I had dearly loved. Looking her straight in the face the likeness was not absolutely missing, but an oblique view brought out strongly certain peculiarities I had never remarked in another. Also, there was the same quaint catch in her voice. But at length she stopped, and said:

"I don't think there is anything else I can tell you

that you want."

She rose to go, and I shut my note-book, mechanically drew around it a wide rubber band, and shoved it and the pencil into an outer pocket, meanwhile my eyes resting so long on the woman's that I grew ashamed and she looked away and shut out the objective. The children were playing near us.

"Pardon me," I started, "but you will not be offended if I ask you another question; since those we have spoken on relate your experiences in so far as they come in contact with the Public only. This is really private ——"

She nodded, perhaps not quite comprehending, and I, not knowing just which way to enter a delicate domain remarked on her youth, which, while being obvious and truthful, seemed to please her; "and really seem to be too young to be the mother of so large a girl."

"She isn't mine," she acknowledged, drawing to her the little boy. It was plain the boy was very much beloved and the source of much warrantable matronly pride. She added: "This rogue is all I have: the other

is my sister's little girl."

"I had thought so," I told her, glad that the difficulty had been so easily overcome, "for one reason, too,

the children are so dissimilar."

This the woman didn't seem to understand. She looked down at the ground, evidently lost in reflection of the story she had just told regarding her husband, his long periods away from home, his work, and many other things, all tainted with a sense of fear anent his long absence, and the dearth of news. Previous questions had brought out the fact that the absent man had much inherent nobleness of heart, sensing and acting the part of noblesse oblige toward the little girl playing near me, and toward her widowed mother, to a nearer perfection than many who will perhaps read the Latin phrase and understand it, as this humble miner did not.

The woman had lapsed into a heavy silence following her explanation with regard to the children, her eyes raised from the ground and directed toward the darkening side of the universe. Her attitude, the drawn look of her otherwise fair face, the pensive

longing, longing, all told as plainly as if she had uttered

the thoughts aloud: "He has gone that way!"

"He was never so long before?" I asked, and she turned her big, sad eyes full on me as if to question how I knew her thoughts.

Knew them! Oh, God, who can mistake the dumb pain of Anguished-suspense in Woman's face or Man's?

My question was prompted with a heartfelt desire to aid — if possible. It brought only added pain, and the baffling information that he went sometimes weeks without writing, having in a marked degree that natural repugnance toward pens and ink which seems to be characteristic of men who toil manually.

Evidently my expression had aroused every atom of doubt regarding myself, and fear regarding him. She suddenly clasped her hands together in a way that tore my heart to see, and asked point blank: as if it had

never before occurred to her:

"You haven't — oh, you haven't come to tell us he's dead?"

Her black eyes set on mine, and I assured her I had no ulterior design, which was truth exact. I knew nothing then of the coincidence bridging the vastness of Impossibility; and, seeing the woman's intense feeling, when I did know I suffered intensely, actually physicially and mentally, to withhold from her what I feared a certainty. I knew dilatoriness would not add one jot to the poignancy, yet stood every chance of preparing the poor soul to hear what, as she a moment later told me herself, she feared. But in confidence, apart from the little folks, who had removed some distance in their play, but anon came to us then away again, she whispered:

"I wouldn't have Sister know that I think something's happened to him for the world! She never could stand a hard blow that way; even the fear of it has caused—"

Then, abruptly changing the subject proper she remarked that "in his trade there's so many places he goes to without us knowing sometimes, and may be . . . may be get killed . . . " which bare suggestion brought tears surging from her eyes without the formality of crying.

I felt such embarrassment that once or twice I was prompted to leave, but in a minute she turned to me again, her features showing nothing particularly of the

emotion, adding, as if she had not stopped:

"But the suspense is better than — better than — that! Oh, it is better than that," she echoed. "If I thought we would never see him again, what would we do?"

The woman stopped again, overcome by a deeper emotion than before. Her poor body quivered and heaved convulsively. My words, his absence, her acute imagination had lent reality where as yet none existed. Silently I had stolen some distance away, and looked and looked —— east —— where the great carbon fields pour out death in invisible form for the brave soldiers of the Underground, who must work while we enjoy the fruits of their labor. Then at the woman and those dear little ones at play, and something within me said: This is but one! What, Mortal, could you see them all?

I turned to see the woman awaiting me, her eyes hard set across the distant hills, her lips still slightly aquiver, herhands wringing her apron as the dumb anguish of Anticipation wrung her soul. She smiled the faintest, and said:

"That was foolish of me, when I don't know — for sure — but the thoughts of it ——" She shuddered: this least sensitive of the two sisters: and yet I have heard fair lips suggest, "those mining women could not possibly feel such a thing as we would!" Indeed! Mrs. Oakley, but you are giving the lie to the egotistical supposition, thinks I, then turning:

"I, too, have known suspense," I interposed, "and can perhaps more deeply sympathize with you than

most. Suspense is ——"

Let who have known it fill the pause.

I stopped, seeing the woman turn in apparent trepidation, half-afraid of a Presence I could not see. Once only did I catch a glimpse of it, when, with dark, lustrous eyes it raised a warning finger, ostensibly to a fallen hair strand.

"That's my sister," almost proudly adduced the woman; "would you like to — to — see her? She could tell you lots of things for your paper, I reckon, as she's seen a lot of the dark side, too, being a widow since her husband was killed."

"Yes, if you please, in a minute," I replied, repressing a smile at the quaint expression in doubling a truth, "but — to thank her as well as you for this privilege," I turned. Then again, seeing no way out of it I blurted:

"You look so much like a girl I used to know that for a moment I wondered if it could be possible that you and she — but then, it can hardly be — so far from the city —"

I was interrupted by a little voice near me. The boy

had brought his soldiers of wood and dropped the regiment with a thud that brought shame to "drum major" and pity from the "general."

"Does you live in der city?"

I bent to the little chap, and helped him form his "killed" soldiers anew in battle array, and told him

I did — sometimes. "Would you like to?"

"Yes;" then 'no, tir," he replied undecided, evidently quite satisfied with the little cottage and the women who presided over it, and the large open fields lying between it and a distant range of low-lying hill. "But dat's w'ere Dad dot dese; an' Auntie says she will dett some more an' a wubber ball when she does to de

city tause Uncle's dere, burwied, so he is."

I expressed sympathy, and looked up in time to catch a glimpse of The Vision with dark eyes and darker hair. She stood for a bare moment at the door, ostensibly to throw away some "scraps." But as she turned I saw the warning finger raised again, and remarked that the woman nearer me grew restless. The color came and went in her face, and I could see plainly the semi-hypnotic control of the master mind, and the contending emotion of desire to please us both. I determined suddenly to end the interview. I pulled out my watch, and snapped it shut without seeing the time.

"I believe I must go now," I said, rising, "or miss

my train."

The woman rose, too, forgetting in her confusion to repeat the invitation she had previously extended to see her sister. I also felt similar in a lesser degree, which accounted for my forgetting what the little boy had said. He looked up at me at if expecting me to

say something. Failing in his anticipation he, childlike, carried on the conversation, while I still lingered, my man-soul loath to leave such a splendid group of humanity alone, temporarily uncared for, and, from casual analysis of certain utterances during the woman's story, in sore need verging horribly close destitution. I would have offered alms - or, if she would have accepted payment following the deliberate lie I had told, I would have been glad - but, truthfully I was afraid to offer either to femininity so independent of spirit. There was but the trifling privilege of a candy present to the children left, which I was rummaging to find, its size obviously limited owing to the peculiar chance of misconstruction of motive. I listened, smiling down at the blue eyes turned up to mine, the red lips inviting their owner's presence being that I had forgotten to.

"Tessy an' me'll bofe tum — an' Wover," the latter anent a fine canine specimen of Newfoundland breed, idly sleeping in the shadow of the giant willow's base.

The coin fell into my pocket from fingers suddenly grown nerveless, as I bent to the child, and, almost a full minute looked at him, at "Tessy," and at the woman who had bent to help the little girl gather her playthings. And during that time the full force of a single wo d was struggling to rise from the subconscious to the conscious brain.

"Tessy;" I repeated over and over, slightly audible, gazing meanwhile, — staring would be the precise word — at a single spot on the ground. Somewhere I had heard that name; somewhere. Not for a moment did it occur to me that perhaps in the casual reading of the letter found on the dead miner's body

the word had occurred Nor could I well have substantiated my theory in that premise just then. Had I been usually rational, lucid, my memory would not have failed me thus, but the exigencies of the occasion were such to one in my condition of body and mind—that I even now do not wonder that my brain refused to recall acutely any *minor* happening of the past days.

"Tessy," I repeated, still louder, almost savage in my desperation, and the little girl and the woman turned full face to me, the former's eyes dark as the Vision's

I had seen in the window.

"Sir," piped a girlish voice, but I paid no heed. My weakness, for which Lowden had suggested this galloping hither and thither, had suddenly asserted itself. I was trembling, and by the look on the woman's face, and the stare on the girl's, I knew I was pale to deathness.

"Where have I heard it? 'Tessy', 'Tessy.'

I still failed to grasp the elusive thought. The woman caught the little girl's hand, and motioned by her head to the boy. All of them moved slightly distant from me, and stopped. The girl's form standing at the distance, in the full glare of an evening sun, was so like another in miniature, I fancied.

"Tessy," I repeated again, but Tessy only moved the further away, clinging to the woman's skirts. Then, giving the lie to an ill assumed composure I uttered aloud: "My God! can it be that my search is ended?"

I uttered that sentence not in irreverence, Reader, believe me: rather in prayer, solemn invocation that my thought be substantiated. Seeing the startled look on the woman's face I tried to regain composure.

"Pray, pardon me," I said; "the child mentioned a name that startled — that — er — "

I floundered around. Coherence of thought seemed suddenly to have left me. My whole being, mental and physical, seemed to have centered on one sole idea. In my effort after composure I went nearer and patted gently the little boy's head.

"What did you say?" I asked.

He repeated his suggestion.

The old weakness came again, but I struggled against it. I stepped to the little girl, smiling — thin disguise of tumultuous heart — and asked:

"Is your name Tressy, my dear?"

"Yes, sir," came promptly. It was obvious the child was well trained.

I stammered in my endeavor to find a plausible way. I did not care to make a premature fool of myself, though several times I felt prompted to take the girl up and shout for sheer joy. Conservatism came flooding back in time to save me from making a needless idiot of myself. "Tressie," indeed! I nor my Helen had no "Tressy," and the name — even had we — was not uncommon.

I turned to the woman, ashamed of my unwarranted outburst, having long ago learned the lesson of taking nothing in this world for granted, unless I desired to be disillusioned later by finding it not substantiated by facts.

The woman was now more composed than I. But I determined to end conjecture. If — as a few straws pointed — this death-wind blew in the woman's direction, she had to know it sooner or later. If my supposition proved false it would not add a great deal to

the misery she already endured, and anyway, "it will clear the be-fogged atmosphere," thought I.

I began by asking the woman what was her husband's

name.

"Oakley," she said, and the old drawn look of dread

came again to her face.

"I'm wrong," I said inaudibly. Then it suddenly occurred to me: but the nickname, or rather the abbreviation of "Robert" is "Bob," of "William," "Bill" or "Will." Perhaps Oakley is his surname.

"You did not address him so in your letters?" I asked, in my heart hoping she did. But my desire was

not to be granted. She voiced the fatal word:

"We always call him 'Bob,' " with a sweet reminis-

cent smile playing about her eyes, her lips.

The word struck me like a bullet. Its force numbed me to my very soul, as I thought: "Oh, God, how soon must that smile change!" And it must have shown on my features. The woman's eyes pierced me: "You've come on a sad mission," they said, but her tongue could not speak the words. I knew not how to state what I knew. I parleyed thus:

"Does 'Bob,' as you call your husband, work for Morgan and Tyler, of Indianapolis?" I asked, using the present tense by choice, until uncertainty was all

removed.

She nodded' now paler than I.

"And you have not heard from the man — your husband, 'Bob,' since he left a town in Washington County, Pennsylvania, for another in Allegheny County, same state?" I prompted.

This also she affirmed, and her affirmation crushed

out almost the last fragment of hope within me. She did not notice it, and I was not positive — yet. The mines contain many "Bobs," and they are ever on the move from field to field; few trades are subject to more migration. I pleaded to gain time: "Will you please sit down? . . I am not — not as strong as I

might be, and the heat -"

She suggested water, and while she went to the house for it I moved my chair to a cooler spot, still nearer the tree, and glanced furtively at the letter I had brought from the dead stranger. But as before it gave me no positive proof, and I determined on withholding it until it and what the woman had to say should coincide, or if they failed to do this to my complete satisfaction I would let the letter remain undiscovered to the little group. Could you, Reader, blame me?

She returned with the glass of water, and giving it

to me said:

"Sister said perhaps I'd better ask you into the front room because," the woman took care to inform me that it wasn't because Sister had any desire to make my acquaintance, but, "because you are likely a member of

Bob's Company."

I couldn't see how the woman reached such conclusion — unless she thought my words of the day before untruth. "But perhaps she had good reason for thinking all men's assertions crotchety until she has found them stable." Then, to myself also: hardly repressing a smile at the frank expression: "It is better just now that I let that impression remain." Unable to do any better I partly prevaricated by saying: "It

is that fact, my dear woman, which has brought me here."

Gladly would I have brought the knowledge to the woman sooner, but I could not encompass my desire. Obviously she had suffered enough as it was. I had hoped for my words to prepare her in a measure for what was, I thought, surely to come, but instead she exclaimed:

"Oh, my! Bob hasn't done anything wrong, I hope!" her mind evidently running on impossibilities, taking her husband's position with the company into account.

I quickly reassured her on that point, adding: "The worst he has done is what all brave men will do, and so far as I may judge, he has the too frequent reward of heroism."

I prepared for alarm: I saw a dark pair of eyes light with gladness! The woman had misconstrued my words. . . I could not tell her point blank: "Madam: your husband is in his grave," for I did not know for a certainty, although many things pointed to it.

The little boy ceased playing, and, with that quick familiarity of child life came up to me and put his little hands on my knees, his eyes resting on mine, wonderingly, full of trust — and peace. In a less pliant way I tried to acknowledge his friendliness.

"Then you intend going to the great big city, sometimes — Indianapolis do you mean, Little Boy?"

"No, tir," he replied. "We're doin' to w'ere Aunt Helen lived, aint we Ma?"

"Ma" nodded, I dimly remember. Sparks of terror and gladness were blinding me, as I watched and

listened to the lisp of childhood forging this chain of destiny. My emotions and my method of dealing with the unusual matters were, I frankly admit now that all is over, not the emotions nor the method of a rational human being. I was just then decidedly irrational, and eager. I listened to the child.

"And Aunt Helen's doin' to take me an' Tessy to see w'ere dey buwwied Uncle George . . . dat's

Tessy's papa. . . '

For the moment I had forgotten the woman before me, as well as the letter reposing in my pocket, and the oft returning, and as frequently crushed, desire to take it therefrom to say to the woman what I found beyond me; for the cruel marks of the improvised morgue were on it. Robert Oakley's effects, be they never so small, bore the same letter and number as his person. gave they mute evidence in brief wording that death had claimed the owner, and not deeming it necessary I had not removed them. I turned to the woman, using every effort I knew, including the biting of my tongue the sinking of my nails into my palms, and several other means, I remember, to crush down my desire to be precipitate. I had waited so long, I could surely abide one more minute, even though it seemed a day. I queried, almost calmly:

"What is your sister's name, that sister in the house yonder — the mother, you say of this girl?"

"Helen," she replied.

I clutched at the seat, otherwise in the extremity of my weakness I must have fallen. My mind, deluded hitherto by false anticipation, soon recovered itself, and partial equanimity replaced physical weakness with a stronger feeling. It was well that this was so, or the sudden confirmation of my wildest hopes was, indeed, sufficient to unseat reason by excessive joy.

"Was your maiden name Furness?"

She replied simply: "Yes," looking hard at me.

My mind failed to fully grasp the pivotal importance of the word at the instant it was uttered. In a semidazed manner there percolated upon me the information that my travels and disappointments were ended in this unlooked-for place. In vain moments I had conjured a climax and environment befitting an occasion so deeply centered into my life; if lacking pretentiousness, at least tragic. It was neither. Those little walls, then, held all that was dear to me in this world; all that years of persistent effort had failed to bring had accidentally, providentially, been thrust upon me. My cup of joy was surely here to fill, and for another sorrow. But that was crowded out. There came a fleet suggestion that all I could do or say would not in her case change the fact; yet with regard to another and myself realization of the fullest truth could not come too soon. I looked at the woman — the child, and rose hurriedly, moving toward them, sure at last.

"Tressy! my child — my child!" I cried, as the woman, alarmed for my senses, watched me take to my breast the little girl, pale with fright, soothingly whispering to her that I was her Papa, and foolishly asking her if she did not know me! Sarah looked on alarmed.

"Oh, is there anything wrong — with — with —

vou?"

"Nothing; thank God; nothing!" I cried; "all, instead, is right, — except — except —"

I could not find in my heart room — just then — for words I knew must come later. I could not plunge that simple, trusting soul into the very deepest labyrinths of human gloom, when, at the same minute, through her and hers I had risen, after years of effort, to the sunlight of human joy. Good news only suffers by delay, thought I, and delayed the bad by deliberate intention.

I took the woman's arm — my sister's arm — in mine, and, she, resenting the unexplained familiarity, tried to displace it. But joy had brought vigor. I moved her, compulsorily, toward the cottage. She asked me almost in one breath what was my meaning for acting thus, and had I news of Robert. To both I replied rather incoherently, but sufficiently lucid for the woman to understand that my intentions were perfectly proper and had in them no taint of that kind of insanity she feared. She stood still, looking at me.

"Oh, it can't be that you're George," she exclaimed "it can't be. He's been dead — dead — these many

years - why, before Tressy was born."

We had stopped a moment, scarcely knowing what we did. "He was a young man, too, and you," looking

upward at my gray hair, "are -"

"Dead — dead —" I echoed, "but death," I remembered saying, "is but the prelude to a larger, better life." I felt no desire to argue or explain that which to me was now overwhelmingly positive. I knew she would understand later.

We had reached the cottage door, the two children open-eyed, in wonder, watching us. Neither child felt equal to the courage necessary to follow "such a strange man," as my own Tressy later confessed to calling me.

A DARK RED ROSE.

And when stern death, with skeleton hand

Has snatched the flower that grew in our breast,

Do we not think of a fairer land,

Where the lost are found, and the weary at rest?

Oh, the hope of the unknown Future springs,

In its purest strength o'er the coffin and shroud!

The shadow is dense, but faith's spirit-voice sings

"There's a silver lining to every cloud."

-ELIZA COOK.

LITTLE may I say here of my meeting with Helen. The Reader may better imagine than I describe the tumultuous emotions, as I told of my life from the day I had last seen them until then; how I had learned of Oakley's death; of my wanderings through many states. There stirs that within the human breast at such times which never comes again — emotions so reverential, so deep, as to be past portrayal.

Paradoxically, it was a joyful meeting; yet, sad, oh how sad! Sunshine and shadow were, as they often are, closely allied. The night went swiftly by — for me. I listened with rapt attention to Helen's version of her flight from home, and fully concurred in the validity of her reasons for such action. Also learned I that Mrs. Furness had eventually forsaken the family, but that the children were fortunately all large and able to take care of themselves.

It was with reluctance I left them long enough to go back to the town's centre to cancel my self-imposed mission by telegraph, and order that within the next twenty hours the most imposing granite shaft obtainable with wording I had "repeated," to insure correctness, be erected over the spot where Robert Oakley lay. The conventions of the Busybodies held at home, Helen and the children, much against my will. Further instructions I also gave, which left no doubt but when we would pay his resting place a visit, the remembrance of him, typified by words truthfully possible only to such a man, would be an honor to us and the noble soul whose body reposed beneath them.

As I went out of the gate at the garden end I met Bobbie, the very miniature of his father, if we may

believe the brief description given me — then.

The little fellow was playing "horse" by himself, whipping his own high-stockinged legs into faster gait. The women had taken the dog to the kennel for the night. Bobbie ran toward me, and I was prompted to take him with me but for Helen's extreme abhorrence of such a move at that time.

He asked if I were going back to the city, and I assured him I wasn't — that night, but that when I went he, too, should go to see the big houses, and stay with

me as long as he liked.

His big blue eyes opened wide as he turned his face up to mine in wonder, doubtless the little mind back of them conjuring pictures of what the "big houses" were like. His free hand stole into mine, and he whispered confidentially:

"I shall take Wover, too."

I acquiesced. "An' Tessy."

I was also ready to agree to that. Then his mind suddenly grasped the faint possibility of the absent papa being left, and he added: while still clinging to my hand as I moved:

"I won't dow widout him."

"All right," I promptly agreed, eager to leave the little fellow, and seek the completion of my purpose in the town. He still clung to me, however, looking up into my face with an apparent presentiment that I might yet do him a wrong either by taking from him someone or something he loved, or by omission reach the same—to him—undesirable end. And that look, my Reader, had I ever wronged Somebody's Child, or contemplated it, would have burnt with the fire of Trustful Innocence to the last recess of my soul! As I looked into the limpid depths of that child's eyes I felt glad that no action of mine had ever unnecessarily deprived such an one of bread either directly or indirectly. I felt a song of thanksgiving surge upward from my heart that as the opportunity offered, I had grasped it to have such as little Bobby well fed, suitably clothed, and trained for useful citizenship. My check had at times made this possible in the child's own home, when the Bread-winner had perhaps for all time been taken from the Ranks of Toil, and yet was still Spartanlike endeavoring to train, to keep, to educate the little group to grow into good women and good men, morally and physically. I was glad at that moment that no opportunity which offered was by me refused. Nor did I forget that brave men, self-sacrificing, God-fearing

and Human-serving, give in many admirable institutions the same care, and on a larger scale have the same purpose toward little defenceless children. had found it most easy to be blind to the existence of such Institutions, or to draw in my purse strings with my fingers while my tongue shouted: "Creed!" forgetting if I would, that the uplift of Humanity is really such regardless of the name it takes. One series of questions alone did I ask: Is it necessary? And with a finger that should wither our civilization they pointed to the little ragamuffin, of Bobbie's age and larger, sleeping in coal bin or in a box, eating or starving as his child fortune fluctuated. I was satisfied. they clothe them and feed them? and they answered by taking me from end to end to see with my own eyes. Yet still, not wholly convinced, I asked:

"What is the Harvest?"

And they showed me a record of good citizenship, good workmen, useful to their town, their country, to their families when married, a record which carries shame to the centre of a National or State Law which makes no adequate provision for these waifs, "just similar to you, my dear little fellow," said I, bending to Bobbie, "little chaps without a father, or worse——'

Live I to be a hundred I shall never forget the look of that child when I inadvertently blurted the truth regarding his Papa. My mind wandering on other things I had allowed it to slip off my tongue's end, and tried to recall it when it was too late. Otherwise a well-behaved little chap as boys go, yet he struck at me viciously with the tiny whip he carried, and pulling his hand abruptly from mine stood apart glaring half-

defiantly: Nature's prompting the young to self-protection; the instinct of the male to ward off the destroyer

of its species.

"I have dott a Papa, too," he pouted, at once ashamed, I could see, of his outburst — perhaps more fearful of the result if his mother should get to know it, "only he aint dott work, yet, an' he tant tum home . . he sends me a dime every pay day, so he does," he whimpered.

His head was bent, and he was not alone trying to keep a brave front. But I must needs leave him, and acquiesced outwardly in his desire to have a Papa.

"I made a mistake, that's what I did, Bobbie," I told him placing my hand on his shoulder, "but we'll fix it," I added more cheerily.

I pulled from my pocket a new silver half-dollar,

and held it toward him, saying:

"It's just this way, Bob ——"

He looked up, pleased.

"Shall I call you 'Bob'? That's a man's name isn't it?"

He smiled. He nodded, and I reiterated:

"It's just this way:" handing him the coin, "Dad's been and forgot to send Little Bob ——"

Again he stopped me.

"No, not 'little'," straightening his shoulders; "I'm

just 'Bob.'"

"All right, then," said I hurriedly, "Dad's a machinerunner, and they and those miners often do strange things and forget to come home. For instance here's Dad been and forgot to come home for five pay days, nor sent Bob his pay-day money and I'm going to lend you all of it at once, and you can pay me back when he comes . . . how's that?"

An innocent, trusting smile lighted the features which but a moment agone were ruffled with impotent wrath, eyes dancing, and with a bare "Thank you, tir," he ran off to take Tressy and the dog to a candy and peanut shop.

But I didn't smile as I went down the hill to the

town. And I wondered:

"What if I, indirectly, or directly brought about a multiplicity of result like that," and my heart, on one hand condemning, on the other reached forth the palm of pity.

"The mills of the gods," I quoted, and tailed it anew: "on the screening day mesh fine." Conscience and eternity are adequate. Forgive and — prevent.

As I climbed the hill on my return to the cottage, Helen and Tressy met me, the former's dark eves beaming with the light of new love. My daughter was diffident. She placed her hand in mine, but very lightly, as if still half afraid. Sarah — poor soul — had tearfully begged Helen to go alone to meet me. She would re-arrange our tiny bed-room for the single night, or, perhaps, two, we intended to remain there, placing a cozy "springing cot," Helen called it when telling me, in her Aunt Sarah's room for our Tressy. Hitherto "she has always slept with Mamma," Helen smiled, placing her arm in kind motherly fashion over Tressy's shoulders. The child was full of wonder, and not altogether willing to acquiesce. It was hard to give up the sole prerogative of years — of a lifetime — for her. Still deeper grew the wonder when her mother attempted falteringly to explain that henceforth her room must be different from ours, separate, apart. She was mollified in part when I promised her an altogether more luxurious apartment "for her very own" than even her mother's and my room with all its tastiness. It was hard for the child to conceive of anything better than that.

When we reached the cottage we found that Sarah had indeed been busy. A complete transformation had taken place. Sweet-scented bed linen had mysteriously come from hidden recesses of a spacious chest, for Sarah, and Helen, were both of that class of housewives who are always prepared in the way of reserves. Poor Sarah! It was plain every minute she had worked — for our greater pleasure — she had cried. It was hard for Helen and me to keep back the welling tears of

sympathy.

The children early went to bed. For awhile Sarah remained with us, but womanly intuition took her also to rest—I will not say sleep—shortly after Tressy had left us. My wife and I sat on a soft hummock of grass; full in the horizon the harvest moon rose all resplendent in her silvery gorgeousness. Above us, and wrapping our forms completely in its embrace, shimmered a shadowy elm, the friction of its slightly rustling leaves the only sound. In the cottage we had seen the last flitting of Sarah's lamp go past the window facing us, and, reaching the farther room where Helen's sister slept, it had gone out. The night was far advanced. Scarcely a light shone in the black-looking piles which denoted the town dwellings. The moon rose higher and the shadows about us grew deeper,

and the night was sensuously warm, and fragrant with many flowers and new-mown clover of a field adjoining. For Oakley had chosen his home amid the fields.

Deeply moved with the intense love she bore me—almost, I feel sure, equally intense as the first night I had held her to my bosom—Helen laid her head, tired, in part, in passion more, on my breast. My arm encircled her, her hand in mine, her warm, pure breath awoke the long dormant desire I had thought buried. A rose—dark almost as the raven hair it nestled among—in the shadows—exhaled its perfume and brushed my cheek as I bent to kiss her rosy lips. The beating of her heart was so tumultuous I feared for the effect of so strong emotion.

"It's a kind that never kills," she replied in a sweet

whisper.

So I kissed her again, and laid my coat at the tree base that she might lie recumbent, and still remain to enjoy the beauties of that unusual night.

"If you, too, will lie here," she said; and to please

her I lay beside her.

I know not the exact hour we fell asleep; I only know our perfumed bed within the walls had not been occupied. Helen was first to awake. She touched me gently and I awoke startled for a moment only. Her smiling, blushing face soon re-assured me. She pointed without speaking to the great red disc lying on the distant hilltops beyond the town's farther side, and stood up to re-arrange her disentangled hair, and the rumpled folds of her light skirts. Like a pair of bashful lovers — which indeed we were — guilty of some great indiscretion — we stole quietly into the house. While I

arranged much business Helen lighted the coal fire, and prepared breakfast, an hour or so later calling, to join us at the breakfast table, the three loved ones from the upstairs room.

The following day Sarah, Helen, the two children and I, started on a lengthy journey. Sadness and pleasure were uncommonly mingled with us all except the little

ones.

Far from the city, its smoke, its noise, with feelings of worshippers at a holy shrine, we breathed the perfume of the upland city of the dead. Sunset of a beautiful day was approaching. From a broad piece of a gradually uprising ground a tapering spire parted a distant grove of trees looming dark against the fast reddening sky. To the right lay a green meadow, to the left the graveyard. With melancholic thoughts—Sarah, especially, so wrought that distress near overcame her strength—we walked between long rows of the dark mansions which we, too, must so soon occupy. Turning, we passed rows of cypress waving sadly and funereal above the monuments of stone.

"This way," said our guide, as we followed, quietly

and grief-stricken, where he led.

"This way," I echoed, quoting from some passage I had long ago read, I knew not where; "this way the pride, the pretension, the ambition, the vanities of humanity end. This way animosity is buried, service made powerless, love loses its potency for evil or good, virtue and sin alike await the last call of an all-powerful God."

We came to a well-cared-for lot, in which flowers and trees were regularly planted, covering with their beauty the base of a towering shaft. The city men who deal in these mementoes can do well in a very short period I knew that, but I was indeed astonished at the extent of their work.

The trees of the vicinity stirred as a slight wind swept through them. A faint hum of the distant city came with it: incongruous reminder of that other world. The women by my side sobbed piteously, and my own eyes were not dry. The form below us we had all loved. I, who had not seen him, felt for him as for one of the same flesh — of the same parents. Beneath the outspread hand of an allegorical figure exemplifying his life there lay deep in the everlasting stone one word — the only one I had caused to be engraved: — NOBILITY, and beneath it was later copied as well as the chisel could my simple tribute.

Reverently I laid my wreath upon the mound; Helen and Sarah did likewise. Plucking a small bunch of leaves I turned. The sun was fast sinking below the distant hills; the faint breeze had ceased to murmur in the cypress boughs. I took each sister's arm in mine, and slowly we retraced our steps to the carriage at the gate. A few minutes later we were well on our way to the deep valleys from whence came stronger and

stronger the voices of Life.

Thus ended our first visit to this beautiful spot, where frequently, in after days, we wended, and where, in God's own time, we too, shall be laid, whether or not we shall deserve the inscription that covers our future companion in silence.

Later Bobbie went with me to the city, this time to remain there for awhile, and not simply pass through it on a sad way elsewhere. Time in a measure had wooed away the abnormal grief, and brought a normal desire for the pleasures of life. The only reminder of our recent bereavement was the mourning worn by the women and children, and for us all an inner consciousness of the frailty of human life.

I recall vividly the first time we traveled thus together, and what a feeling of buoyant pride welled up within me each time I looked across the aisle where sat my daughter, who, I can truthfully say, I cared for nor loved one bit more than the little boy whose father had cared so well for mine. To the World in the new life as they had been to themselves in the old, they were as brother and sister. Although dissimilar in looks, in traits they were alike — thanks to mutual training.

The two days we spent away from home were ever-to-be-remembered by the little folks even more than us; and with a joyousness long missing we returned to the old station to go south along that river whose banks were fraught with much memory for me, of incident depressing and otherwise. The car was crowded with folks from the big mill towns, and Bobbie sat on my knee, Tressy on Helen's. Sarah shared the latter's seat, and gazed pensively across the curving water. And when I occasionally turned it would be to see Helen's dark eyes looking over my way with a wistful girlishness which showed plainly as words that she begrudged even so slight a parting from the presence so long denied. At times a puff of soft south wind would rush inward, and playing among the raven

strands would toss them whiriing to her neck. This happened several times while I watched, and sub-consciously her hand would steal up to replace it, showing the glistening bands of wedlock and of friendship—the narrow gold circle I had placed there on our wedding eve, and another of unusual neatness and small size engraved with *his* initials.

Tealous?

No! May a Just God who can read all hearts place it against me for all eternity if I do not love her more for treasuring it!

THE END.





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